GOD'S JESTER

The Story of Father Michael Pro, S. J.

By Mrs. George Norman

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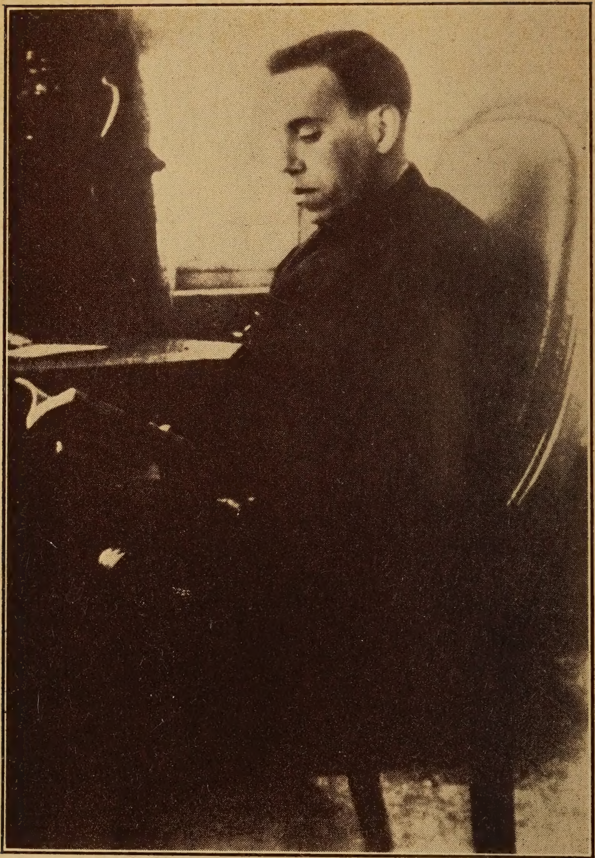

Mig. A. Pro S.J.

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The Story of the Life
and Martyrdom
of Father Michael Pro, S.J.

BY

MRS. GEORGE NORMAN

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persecution which took place in Mexico during the Calles presidency, that the world in general has come to understand how genuine, how vibrant behind the camouflage of unrepresentative liberal governments is the Catholicism of Latin America. For to defend the faith and the traditions of their fathers—and within the space of only three years, thousands of Mexicans died fighting in the sun-bleached mountains of Jalisco, Michoacán and Guanajuato; 147 priests were shot and 160 youths of the Catholic Young Men's Association rehearsed anew in the valleys of Anáhuac the most glorious exploits of the Roman amphitheater.

"Stat Crux dum volvitur orbis."

CHAPTER I

MIGUEL, or as we should say Michael, Pro was born in one of those mining cities among savannah-colored hills, pine-coated, overhanging great gorges in which stark light is caught and turned to imperial purple, tender rose, the sharpest blue: a free, wild land.

Ten thousand feet above the Pacific on the one hand and the Atlantic on the other, Concepción del Oro in the State of Zacatecas was a not unimportant mining center. The boy's father was a mine owner, a director; a rich man.

Here Miguel grew from brown-skinned, black-eyed babyhood, the eldest boy in a family of four brothers and three sisters, into an eager vivid little boy with a passion for the mines.

To go down in the great cage with the boss his father, the overseer, perhaps a peon or two; the first jerk of the descent, the slow-up to steadier motion, the gathering swiftness down into darkness, to the very roots and center of the world . . . pure rapture. The dim, strangely-lit aisles, the junctions with the Madonna shrines gleaming yellow; the mysterious passing of the half-naked Benitos or Pedros, the richness of dark bodies shining in the veiled light of lamps; the strange earthy smells, the rather breathless sense of awe, of glimpsed danger—all this to the little beady-eyed boy was thrilling.

Life altogether was thrilling. Back again in the sunshine—that weight of light so sharpening things—the crested mountain peaks, the humped hills, the paths between stiff fences of cactus, the gleaming sky, the gaunt pit-heads against the blue—Miguel was hard put to attending to anything so dull as first lessons.

How infinitely pleasanter to have bestridden the burros—the mountain donkeys—or even wickedly to run after and tease them; to meet the ox-wagons toiling up the steep forked road from the valleys; to paddle in the stream beds, those trickling mirrors of the quivering sky; even to lie face downward peering into cracks in the parched earth-surface leading, who knew? into the mine below.

But there were Miguel's parents to be reckoned with, the kind, handsome, bearded Señor Pro, the gentle but firm Señora, busy with the household and the younger ones but never too busy to keep an all-seeing eye on Miguel.

The life of the place, of the flat-roofed houses, or those more lopsided ones climbing the mountain, all dwindling to huts among the pine trees—adobe huts and little dwellings of the peons—all this centered, as always in Mexico, round the white towered church built, no doubt, by the Spaniards, for they had built such churches everywhere even in mining places. Then there was the plaza in front, and, again no doubt, the bandstand, for whatever else a Mexican will do without it will not be music.

It was a vivid, harsh, entrancing existence for a little boy, but it did not last indefinitely. Miguel was still small when Señor Pro moved his family to El Saltillo, a far larger mining center, 5,000 feet nearer sea level, the capital of the State of Coahuila which is the third largest of Mexican States and still far north of the capital, Mexico City.

Here was a rather big city—to alert young eyes an enormous one; something like 35,000 inhabitants and an important railway junction, a trading place with Gringos—Americans—whose upstanding, gaunt business houses struck so discordant a note among the Spanish-roofed houses around. Here, too, the finest serapes of all were woven, those vari-colored Mexican and Indian coverings with a hole through which the head is thrust, which serve every kind of purpose and are an integral part of the national costume.

Speaking pictorially, there was a great panorama of flat roofs, shining at midday with an intensity of whiteness. Here and there trees rose darkly emerald against the white; there was scattered greenery on roof-gardens and green balconies; sun-blinds over grated windows; oleanders and hybiscus—*tulipán*—orange trees and in spring the snow and rosiness of almonds were everywhere.

On the plaza a dead-white cathedral stamped its belfried towers and the rich Spanish lace of its façade against the cobalt of the sky; not far off the great Jesuit church of San Juan Nepomuceno reared a thin cupola and an austerity of line well above the sea of roofs. There was the Alameda where on Sundays the family might walk with all other Saltillon families to see the great fountain fling its waters scintillating against the darkness of eucalyptus and ilex; the "English" park where grew strange cactus, huge pineapple-shaped palms and amazing stone lions and a whole exuberance of exotic green peculiarly un-English.

And all around, bounding the capital of Coahuila, in the manner common to so many Mexican cities, was the still outline of mountains.

There were coyotes in the hills, so Miguel knew, and prairie dogs; what else the prickly ravel of mesquite scrub and bare upland might not harbor, what boy could say? The sun was hot by ten o'clock, hot enough to draw one's aching thoughts from school desks to that distant pinkish-ocher or purple wonderland where great hawks like eagles hovered in the deepening sky, where twisted juniper-trunks sprouted and wild Indian hillmen, their blue-black hair and bodies so dark as to radiate an indigo light, roamed in heavenly freedom. Were there not bandits there as all knew? Caves where such fierce men lay hid or hid their treasure—in the vision of a little boy, chests of gold, great bags of rubies? Ancient sacrificial places too, of the fiercer ancestors of the Indian hillmen; places where their milder descendants of to-day yet held folded the secrets of a thousand years or more? All this a terrible enticement to young ardor, to nostalgia of adventure, perhaps, more than all, of danger.

But greater even than the lure of distance was that of the mines. That was a passion that grew with Miguel's growth.

But there were his schoolmasters; there, as at Concepción, a father and mother to keep Miguel to tasks which really, when one started in on them, were not so dull after all. If it had not been for the mines and the rich wild life out there beyond the last flat roof of Saltillo, and the richer blood dancing in one's veins, all that grammar and those equations were not so bad: one had an aptitude, a quickness.

A quickness every way. There were fights—a good many. Victories. Defeats. One not too inglorious a defeat in particular from a taller adversary less well-received at home, however, than it might have been.

Miguel had set out for school in the morning in a brand-new and resplendent hat, he returned with a ruin.

Señor Pro, of course, still dealt with his mining interests. The Señora Josefa, his wife, Miguel's mother, as at Concepción, would have supervised her household in a one-storied house round one or more patios, those courtyards at the hottest, pleasant spots of refuge, at night deep wells from which the gleaming dark of the sky and the brilliance of stars could be seen, burning southern stars that wheeled and spun.

Running round the patios would be corridors with more flowers in barrels or climbing freely, and from these corridors would open the apartments of the house; from the lesser patio, stairs would lead to the roof on which would be the wash-house of the establishment, the stone *lavadero*. At early morning the provisioning of the house took place; the Señora herself would go to market followed by a *criada* or maid. Hours before that the Señora and all her family would have been to Mass in one of the many churches of Saltillo.

Miguel too went to Mass: he was not, however, particularly pious.

Later, at the midday meal, all the family would reunite; the siesta would follow. From one o'clock to three the streets emptied, shops closed, the very beggars became invisible—the town slept: no one stirred but the policeman yawning on the plaza.

The household, the picturesque half-Indian maids, the laundress, the *mozos* who may range from the youngest lad to elderly manservant, they too would sleep: almost impossible to do otherwise in that sunbeaten land.

After the five o'clock chocolate and *pan dulce* there might be the family outing, that is in the dry season which is from September to June. The Señora and, when possible, the busy mine owner, the girls and boys, in a spreading flânerie indescribable to those who have not seen it, would saunter by the shops to the Parque Inglés or the Alameda, and always a vivid interest, a flow of talk. In the evening usually a friendly family gathering, or the Señora and her daughters at needlework in the sala round the center table and the light. It is at that hour of cool darkness that Mexican love affairs amongst young people arrange themselves. The would-be suitor is stationed, by an ancient convention, beneath the window—barred or merely shuttered in more up-to-date circles—behind which is the lady of his choice. From this lonely position the serenade or courtship is conducted till such time as the family thinks fit to admit the aspirant to the house itself, after which the marriage almost immediately takes place.

Life was dignified, patriarchal; all amusements were enjoyed in common by a family, but amusement was very far from being the end of existence. A beautiful gravity distinguished the parents; a joyous gaiety their children.

Miguel was the gayest of them all. At his Manuel Acuña school he was already known for what afterwards so distinguished him: he was the leader, the wag, the quicksilver of the school. No one was ever bored where Miguel was.

A fondness for food is natural in most countries, because in most countries—not all—food is so well cooked as to be worth eating. Miguel's thoughts dwelt often on tortillas—maize cakes capable of a wonderful diversity: he was in fact a fairly greedy little boy. Once all funds for the purchase of *dulce*, of sweets, had run out. There was a complaisant sweet merchant, yet even he hesitated. "Have no fear," said Miguel, his black eyes bravely encountering those of the doubtful sweet-vendor. "Put it down to my mother." The performance was repeated till the sum totalled up was respectable and the merchant sent in his bill. . . . The Señora paid it, but so did her little boy, but with a difference. Miguel remembered the payment for some time in the body and always in mind. The Señora Josefa was the kindest, the most loving, mother and did not spoil her children. Consequently they loved her in a very wonderful way.

Time passed and meanwhile he was growing up. He never quite finished his scholastic career; his father required his services in an increasingly complicated and exacting business.

Here again Miguel showed an aptitude; his vivid, living interest in life, in whatever *was*, transferred itself without a shock from school tasks to office work. His father wanted him—that sufficed his good heart; the work was mining work, that made it simply the most splendid in the world. He mastered detail, intricacies, pay sheets, all the modern "shop" and commercialism of primitive dealings with the earth. He mastered typewriting before you could look round and acquired, as might be expected, a terrific speed on the amusing machine—a hundred words a minute, so it was said.

But—again as might have been expected—at every legitimate chance he was out of the office and down in the mines.

Here his childish dream came true: he was *friends* with the miners, the peons. He learnt their language and never forgot it, no more than he forgot any other thing his quick, ardent brain registered. Years later he was to find that miners' language spring to his lips as though he had never ceased to use it.

Business and life went swinging along; he was immersed in both. There were still the family prayers at night; the rosary; the Angelus bells pealing from old twin-towers three times daily; Mass in the great romanesque cathedral, but piety played no great part in his scheme of things. It was impossible to be gayer, the family—even the office at times—rocked at his sallies. His guitar, his mandolin, echoed by day in the patios, under the oleanders in the moonlight by night, usually to the brightest sounds; popular tags—Mexican *jarabes*; fandangos; rag-times. But sometimes the old songs of Castille, serenades, *cantinelas*—a stealing melancholy to the brightly-ribboned guitar.

He developed wit; real Latin wit; his sayings were quoted.

He was a caricaturist; always an accurate draughtsman, he now caught in a few sharp lines the most unlikely likenesses, the funny, the funniest aspects everyone knew and no one had noted: he was *tordant*—screaming, as we should say. He was an actor too, capable of improvising a play and even of sustaining all the parts at once; he was, too, unsurpassed as a mimic. Oh! that Miguel . . .

Then he was going out, going into Society. There were theaters; the overwhelmingly attractive *corrida de toros*, the bull-fights of Castille that came over with the Conquistadores of Spain four hundred years ago and that to the Spanish mentality are no more cruel than our stag-hunting, or our battues, with the difference that in the *corrida* the courage required in the human element is extraordinarily great.

There were growing up, too, his sisters, one older than he, two younger; sweet-faced, dark-eyed girls with the lustrous eyes and hair of their race. With them he enjoyed life.

In more serious moments he sometimes thought a little vaguely of devoting himself to the cause of his miners—to their well-being.

And then, one fine morning, all this pleasant light-heartedness received a check, a shock. Two of his sisters were going to enter convents, to be nuns.

Miguel was astounded; no, he was outraged. His sisters, part of his family, to be torn away; the happy, good life round the flowering patios, the peaceful, gay round of good works and family reunions, of quite legitimate amusement, the family prayers, the Sunday Masses with the two beloved charming girls in their high combs and mantillas, the walks by the fountain, the music-making—all this to end, at any rate for them, his dark-eyed sisters.

Why, what more did his sisters want? Were not they models of virtue, of goodness, of a gentle efficiency in the house and the family? True such going had always been: "Everyone that hath left house or brethren . . . for My Name's sake . . ." "For the fashion of this world passeth away . . ." Always in the history of the world certain more heroic souls had hankered after, had passionately sought for, intimacy with God, a putting aside in this life of dear and natural things so as to give a more entire service. But *his* sisters, *his* family to be so bereaved: that was different—unbearable.

And it was the Jesuits' doing! Jesuits, so it now seemed, though he had not, he had to confess, troubled earlier to know it, were his sisters' spiritual directors. To Jesuits, obviously therefore, he, Miguel, owed this dastardly blow. True, his sisters had their own share of will and brain and decision, but alone they would never have done it, of this he was sure. Down, therefore, with the Jesuits!

But the dastardly thing went forward none the less.

His father and mother, who loved their children exceedingly, did nothing to interfere. Inexplicable! Indeed they seemed to think it a not unhappy thing; a quite natural thing . . . Life is so short—to give up more worldly careers for their elder daughters—marriage in a word—seemed a not unbearable blow. "They will love us all the better, Miguel—pray for us, be with us in thought. And then they will be so happy—after all it is their choice . . ." With some such words we can fancy the grave father, the quiet mother, seeking to soothe their irate son.

But it was all no use. Indeed, Miguel seems to have made no particular display of reason at this moment, and when his two sisters left their bereaved if courageous parents, Miguel went too. . . . He went out into the brushwoods and stayed there.

How would he have lived in the woods, those strange uplands of his childish longings? Did he meet the coyotes, the prairie dogs, on the mountain sides, in the many-colored gullies?

The Indian hillmen would have been there—would have been his friends. There were huts, sun-dried brick places, the little adobe huts or the *choza* of a hill-shepherd, where he may have slept, for the nights are cold at those altitudes. But he was young, and prudence was never his most striking quality; he may have lain down under the stars in the deep silence scowling at the softly gleaming vault of heaven from which had descended all his troubles, till he fell asleep.

He was there for days and then someone, his mother —as she would have done—found him. He loved her; she could always influence him. She got him to go home; alarmed no doubt at this outburst, this unbridled impetuosity, this rebellion, she talked to him, with her gentleness, her firmness. She wanted him—Miguel!—to go to make a retreat, that is to retire for a few days' reflection and prayer into some religious house. It is a common enough procedure amongst Catholics, but it was the last thing Miguel wanted to do.

In the end he went.

CHAPTER II

MEXICO is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. It has many aspects, many climates, but always a sky of incomparable blue.

In the north is the desert, with a wild and tragic beauty of its own. Then mid-Mexico—the rippling hill-country, the great plains with their maize fields, their stretching yellow-gold of wheat, their harvest of maguey from which is made the most potent drink of Mexico.

Further south come the semi-tropics, a phantasy of tree and flower, yuccas as tall as houses, heavy branched with swinging bells; poinsettia trees ablaze with snow or scarlet; the swaying iridescence of purple bougainvilleas; palo-blanco with great flowers like snowdrifts—a glowing flamboyance of scent and color, a profusion of life, an acrid challenging beauty under brazen skies. There is the melting loveliness of far snow-peaks in mists as tender and as changing, so the Indians say, as a woman's face. They call Ixtaccihuatl—one of the twin mountains of Mexico City—the wife of that other mountain—Popocatapetel, God of the Aztecs.

Southernmost of all are the fabled tropics with their teeming life, the buried forest cities of Yucatan, lagoons where breed flamingos, the impenetrable darkness of virgin underwoods.

These contrasts are in the temperament of the people. Both fierce and kind, fiery and languid, brilliant, gay or profoundly melancholy, they have as a whole an untamed exuberance of living, of swift laughter, tears or anger, all amazing to less highly vitalized peoples in their midst with whom they will do business but will scarcely mix.

It was therefore with no unbounded surprise that Miguel Pro's father and mother received him back into the family circle from his retreat a changed being.

He had left in anger, in scarcely suppressed revolt at the religious vocation of his sisters; he returned announcing his own. He was going to be a priest; most amazing of all he was going to be a Jesuit. . . . He had been caught like Saul on the road to Damascus—almost he would have "held the clothes" of those who would have stoned the Jesuits, now he was going to enter their famous Society. He had thought of "looking after" the miners, now he was to do more—devote his life to the salvation of their souls, of all souls. That was his dream.

He was twenty. Life was at its spring of joy and beauty; we cannot think that, in that country of vivid life and swift feeling, no eyes had looked alluringly into his; that "the world" meant nothing to him, that pleasure, ease of body, above all, freedom were not hard to abandon. But that in itself would without any kind of doubt have helped rather than have impeded his resolution. To give would have been nothing—to give with the sweat of his body, the blood of his heart, was worth while. One more human creature had seen through the veils of time something of the infinite allurement of God; wanted, above all, to give love in return for the undying love of Christ.

This latter sentiment was the beginning and the end, the whole meaning of what Miguel Pro was, of what he eventually did.

He had in himself the richness, the ardor, the intensity of his race at its best; a high capacity for passion, a courage quite undauntable that time was to show.

All this so far had been covered, as it continued for most of his life to be, by his seeming gaiety, his high spirits, indeed his "ragging." A "dear, good boy" Miguel had been, a little volatile possibly, a lute-stringer, something of a "blood." Underneath was the terrific force of heroism, the naked flame of will.

What precisely it cost him to do what he now did, it is as impossible to estimate as in the case of the millions who have done likewise. He left the two things he loved most, his family and his miners of Saltillo and on August 11, 1911, he entered the Society of Jesus at El Llano in the State of Michoacán.

The Society of Jesus, whose members are known as Jesuits, was founded so long ago as 1534 in that time of transition when the turmoil of action of the Middle Ages was making way for that of unruliness of the spirit. Henry VIII was on the throne of England, Luther had raised his first cries of revolt. Spain was at the zenith of its glory under the still youthful Charles V.

To all that Spanish pride of race and clang of arms was born Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Order of Jesuits, son of a Basque nobleman and himself destined to the life of Court and camp.

The story has been told a hundred times and more. Till his thirtieth year Ignatius went the ways of his fellows, war and chivalry, and for inspiration the following of a remote bright star—some Beatrice of high rank of whom he dreamed afar—and always, we are told, "given up to the vanities of his age; he took special delight in the use of arms, urged on as he was by a great and vain craving for worldly renown."

Renown he acquired within the walls of Pamplona with a besieging army of ten thousand Frenchmen battering at its gates.

There was in Pamplona but a handful of a garrison and the Governor was for surrender. Ignatius with indignant courage and by sheer strength of personality enforced resistance on him and the little band of defenders. The town fell and with it Ignatius Loyola, both legs shot through by a cannon-ball.

That was still the age of chivalry: the French who had taken prisoner the man who had defied them, set him free and sent him back to Guipúzcoa, his home.

He had achieved glory—and months of agony, then of tedium unrelieved. He asked for books, romances, high deeds of war and valor and there were none in his brother Don Garcia's castle of Loyola. They gave him instead the lives of the saints, the life of Christ.

He read them. Here were a higher chivalry, a valor, above all a *meaning* for such things; another and a greater kingdom than even that of Spain for which to fight, an undying King to serve, a Friend to love. He rose up, if not yet a saint, well on the way to sainthood.

Fourteen years later, when he had been to Palestine, gone back to school—to the Schools of Alcalá, Barcelona, Salamanca, and the University of Paris—with seven others like himself he took the solemn vows of poverty and chastity, not in Spain as is popularly and not unnaturally believed, but on the heights of Montmartre from which, to-day, the white basilica looks over Paris. They vowed, besides, pilgrimage to the Holy Land and missionary labor—the Society of Jesus, of the Jesuits, was founded.

The word Jesuit has come to have a significance in the popular imagination which brings a smile to the lips of those acquainted with one or more Jesuits.

Without this wholly fictitious personage, however, the cheerfully illiterate—so abundant in all classes of society—would be so much the poorer. The continuance of the Jesuit type is a tribute at once to the fundamentally romantic nature and the underlying craving for the more literary aspects of things of the great heart of the public. . . . The Jesuit of fiction—say of the brothers Hocking—is one of the bolder flights of fancy; in divergence from prosaic fact, a superb one. How this fiction-type has arisen it is perhaps not difficult to see. The Society founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola for the evangelizing of the poor and the heathen and for the pure glory of God—prayer was his objective, first and last—this Society attracted to itself men of the finest intellect. Europe may be said to have succumbed before the Society founded in obscure humility in the chapel at Montmartre. Before his very eyes Ignatius saw what had been, after all, a personal and private act of dedication, turn into one of the most powerful of organizations.

It is perhaps that power that has made men fear the Order; fear has bred suspicion.

It is chiefly in England that the word "jesuitical" came to mean sly or deceitful. This was perhaps due to the fact that early Jesuit missionaries in that country at the time of the Reformation, and after, were in daily peril of death and went dressed as laymen. Hence the catchword "Jesuit in disguise." Ignorance pure and simple credited them with teaching that you might "do evil that good may come," a doctrine that no Catholic ever taught or could teach.

On the continent, Jesuits got into trouble partly through their opposition to the religious terrorism of the Jansenists, but chiefly at first because their schools were so manifestly better than all the others, the universities included, that they incurred the jealousy of universities and parliaments. Hatred they incurred, too, for their resistance to the exorbitant claims of absolutist monarchies and their ministers, for their stern attitude towards the kings' mistresses of the moment. They were in fact far too intransigent for various groups and persons.

It was to this great body that Miguel Pro affiliated himself when he entered the novitiate at El Llano.

What precise thing it was which had occasioned Miguel's change of heart I have no means of knowing.

There was obviously, as there must always be when a religious vocation is proved to be authentic, a "call," what we rather loosely term a "vocation": for in reality every human being has a vocation, a destiny. In his case Miguel Pro was manifestly "called." Of the means by which this was made apparent to him I am ignorant —whether a direct, sudden summoning, an almost audible command, or some leaping human instinct of his was used by God to turn him in the required direction.

However that may have been it was soon obvious to his superiors that he was of the right stuff, that he had in our modern jargon "found himself." Further, they perceived that they had not only good material but some of the best, with which to deal: a rich nature; spiritual capabilities of a very high order; an ardor, a passion and a will with which to control it all.

But to his new companions Miguel Pro was chiefly known, as he had been "in the world," for what he himself would have called a "comic." He was the same wag, the same joker as before. Père Dragon, S.J. in his short and excellent story of Miguel Pro's life, says that those who remember him begin, even now, by smiling when they speak of him, and that many never had an idea of what underlay his surface aspect.

His touch was so light and gay as never to weary by excess, and his wittiest sallies were always kind. It is difficult to be a wit, more difficult to be a kindly one, but Miguel Pro achieved the feat according to the unanimous testimony of his survivors.

To our effete and so largely de-spiritualized generation there is something possibly romantic but certainly pathetic in this kind of choice of life in a quite young man. The imaginative may penetrate it so far as to see in it some strange romantic quest, some mystic following of, or search for, that Grail which has always had power to lure "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent." Half admiring, wholly compassionate is the attitude of wistful pity for so quixotic a choice.

Even those of us to whom religion has taught more sense, may wince a little before its high austerity, its loneliness, its renunciation.

But there is another side to all this—a sane human happiness in the life chosen. Novices should have, and have if they are of the right sort, a good deal of the robust jollity of schoolboys—and none of their morbidity. Community life can give points to more isolated existence: it can have a purely natural exhilaration, a raciness. It would be a platitude to say that it has its trials, especially for the natural recluse, the sensitive, the highly strung. But so have all lives. The religious one has, from the merely human point of view, that exceedingly tonic and satisfying thing: a single aim with the means of following it. Its votaries do know what they are at; *humanly* speaking it is a good life.

Miguel Pro, at any rate, appreciated it. El Llano's was an extremely happy novitiate. In diaries and letters of a later date references to its "happy days" are countless and regretful.

A Jesuit house, to most of us, suggests either rather splendid colleges, or fine upstanding town buildings. El Llano was a one-storied, larger edition of Miguel's former home, spreading buildings round patios. All that exteriorly distinguished it, at any rate at the time when Miguel Pro arrived there to start his new career, was a religious emblem, a cross, over the architrave above the low balconied entrance literally embowered, in the blinding sunlight, in rather dusty greenery. Everywhere was the Mexican profusion of color, great red and yellow flowers and, in the center patio around the tall white statue which was the architectural pivot of the house, a positive luxuriance of green cascading from tubs, swarming up pillars, descending in showers, as on the gauze wings of our theaters, from sloping roofs and gutters and—it seemed—the sky itself. Here it would be possible to be cool in the most impossible temperatures.

The private chapel too was cool, high, and very simple.

El Llano in the state of Michoacán is on a side-line at about twelve hours distance by train from Mexico City and between it and the town of Zamora, from which latter it is an easy drive.

Miguel is said to have been entirely himself and very natural from the outset of his career at El Llano. It is scarcely necessary to say therefore that he became extremely popular.

The Master of Novices was not slow to report to superiors that he had got something rather remarkable, rather special, in the new probationer. It was his job now to develop, to mold but not to break this rich material.

There are tremendous legends concerning the breaking-in of Jesuit novices, of the thoroughness and severity of the training. There is the one, for instance, of the man who was told to carry upstairs a bucket of water and as soon as he got there being told to carry it down again, the orders being repeated till he threw bucket, water and all, from the top flight of stairs to the bottom. Upon which he was told that although a charming young fellow, he was not likely to make a good Jesuit and was kindly but firmly sent out into the world again.

This legend, whether once an actuality, could be now so no longer; such methods, if ever existent, are to-day entirely out of date.

But any novitiate in the world is for the testing of candidates and you cannot test without trying pretty severely: that must be obvious. It is said, again, that the early training and life of a Jesuit is so exhaustively sifting so to speak, in order that later a greater liberty and very individual development may be possible.

Miguel Pro, had at any rate, the necessary vigor, spirit and will power, and from the beginning seems to have flourished in such novel surroundings.

Two months after his arrival at El Llano he was out playing football or some such game. There was a pause in the proceedings and Miguel, who detested slow motion at any time, swarmed up a goal-post and from there proceeded to improvise an address to his companions. Encouraged by the amusement of his auditors, Miguel became so exhaustingly funny that the game was held up while the entire novitiate gathered round him. The Novice Master happening to pass was arrested by loud sounds of merriment and the spectacle of Miguel on his goal-post. He approached.

"What is going forward?" he enquired.

"A—a sermon," a novice somewhat tentatively replied.

"Indeed. I am sorry I missed it. Perhaps the preacher will oblige again?" And the preacher had to. . . .

That was only one aspect of Miguel. Games and recreation over, he returned to the ranks and was remarkable for his punctilious observance of the rule. His superiors trusted him and he was always one of those who had charges and responsibilities. He had made a lightning-like decision in the matter of his religious vocation, over-impetuous some might have thought it, but he had decided rightly. He had just two years of quiet happiness.

On August 15, 1913, exactly two years after his joining the Society, he was admitted to the taking of his first vows.

It was the end of a period for himself and for his country. He had known, in his new home affection, joy, the pleasure and rigor of a pretty severe training, the homeliness of El Llano, the loveliness of peace. That ended. Revolution was to uproot all that; Miguel was to be an exile, a wanderer and many other unexpected things.

CHAPTER III

ONE reads in fairy lore of the princess who had every gift of fortune—beauty, riches and so forth—and had been denied the gift of happiness, and it would seem as if Mexico were really that fairy princess of countries, as if that "fatal gift of beauty"—and especially that of her natural riches—had so far been disastrous to her.

Mexico has had three cultures.

That called Mexican. Temples, roads and pyramids of the Mexicans, Mayas and other kindred peoples still covered the land when the Aztecs, a most powerful and bloody race, began in the fourteenth century to build among its silver waters the lovely town of Mexitli Tenochtitlan, the Mexico City of to-day.

The second culture was Spanish, that of the Conquistadores. In 1519 five hundred of the latter sailed the almost uncharted seas under Fernando Cortez. They brought no mandate from their great young king and emperor, Charles V, a youth of nineteen, merely that of the Governor of Cuba. But Cortez planted the standard of Spain on Mexican soil.

He was young, gallant and high-minded, a real adventurer of romance. He found in Mexico, or the New Spain, a docile gentle people of an ancient and astounding civilization. Of their architecture and sculpture the youthful conqueror wrote home enthusiastically to his Emperor: "There has been nothing like it seen in Europe."

Charles was enchanted. He set about governing his expanding American possessions with justice and mercy combined. He had his Council of the Indies at home in Spain: his viceroys and governors in the new province; he endowed it with bishops and archbishops, pondered its problems and, we are told, his right to make it obey him. Its dusky peoples weighed upon his conscience: he felt the solemn obligation before God of giving them firstly, Christianity, and, in the second place, the ancient civilization of Spain. The best means of furthering both religion and prosperity he knew to be the sending out of missionaries and they in effect—Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, secular clergy—became the friends, the evangelists, the light of the great new country which was almost five times the size of France.

But alas! Charles died and was laid in the huge fortress-monastery of the Escorial built by Philip II, among the fierce and arid mountains outside Madrid. Viceroys and governors, as for instance Mendoza, Velasco, Bucareli, continued to govern wisely and well, but their underlings grew by degrees despotic. But for these minor officials it would have been the Golden Age of art and industry in Mexico. The Catholic Church had done its work of preservation and development very thoroughly, her schools covered the country, learning flourished. In 1544, John Zumarraga, first bishop of Mexico, established the first of any printing-presses in the New World, "so many were there," said he, "who could read," they needed books of all sorts not only those of religion.

He was as a lion, this Bishop Zumarraga, in defense of his Indians—of their well-being, their possessions, the faith he had helped to give them. He seems to have penetrated not only to their souls but to have fathomed the apparently unsoundable depths of the Indian mind.

In Mexico the Conquistadores at first, on the whole, preserved and raised the natives. The Court of Madrid from afar sought to perpetuate this policy and the Church to the bitter end championed it, standing whenever possible, between the people and any local tyranny.

Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, for instance, still an almost fabled hero of the great days, crossed the ocean no less than fourteen times, against odds we can scarcely even imagine, to defend the cause of the Mexican Indians at the Court of Spain.

Padre Gante, that other superman, a Fleming of the Emperor's own family, baptized "hundreds of thousands of Pagan Indians into Christian souls" and gave his great wealth for the founding of churches, hospitals and schools while himself living the life of the very poor.

Perhaps less famous individually, less recognized on this side of eternity, were the humble Franciscan friars from Spain who had appeared upon the Mexican scene immediately after the Conquest: their lives were simply merged with those of the poorest Indians among whom they lived and labored. The Friars' memory is still held in mountain villages, around old mission churches: the faith they taught has survived.

There was, in any case, in all these dauntless missionaries of so long ago a quality of even human greatness not excelled by that of the flaming Conquistadores themselves. And to-day Mexico—and the most anti-Catholic of its elements—recognize these men as their greatest benefactors from the past. Almost the only statue of recent years erected by the Mexican Government is that of the strong, inspired figure of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas.

But, as time went on, Spain was less and less well served particularly by its legal representatives in the new Spain in the New World: again and again the Crown had to intervene, to deal in no uncertain manner with the growing insolence and extortions of its minor officials. But it was a far cry, in those days, from Madrid to Mexico, and the tide of despotism rose in despite of that distant monarchy which was growing a little shadowy across the mists of six thousand miles of ocean: one could acquire such wealth as almost to snap one's fingers at that far-off tribunal, that dim and distant royal frown.

All this at length told on the endurance of the people. More than any other motive for discontent, however, was the desire of the Creoles to govern themselves and to be free from European tutelage.

The first to raise the standard of revolt against the Spanish masters was a priest—if not one of the most exemplary—Hidalgo y Costilla. Fired by the wish of the people for self-government, this fiery minister of peace flung his biretta over the windmills and likewise the soutane which, one fears, had not so far irked him unduly, put himself at the head of eighty thousand Indians and was taken and executed by the Spaniards. The revolt was started in 1810—Hidalgo was shot in 1811.

The Church authorities, mindful of their long mandate from the Spanish Court, naturally ranged themselves on the side of what was, at least, established law and order. They believed that reform of the existing régime was what was needed, for if the latter were swept away it would have abandoned to confusion and anarchy a still unformed and defenseless people.

This in fact was precisely what came to pass.

In 1821 the Spanish culture in New Spain came to an end. In 1825 a Republic was proclaimed; it inaugurated over a hundred years of bloodshed with one comparatively peaceful interlude of about thirty years.

Revolution succeeded revolution and in 1848 Mexico found herself forced to part with half of her immense territory, comprising Arizona, Texas and New Mexico, to her next door neighbor, the United States.

In 1858, Benito Juárez, a full-blooded Indian, was able to seize the presidential power and in his eighteen years of rule consummated the ruin of his country and its Church.

The Church in Mexico from its mandate from the Spanish Crown—that of contributing the spiritual element to the conquests and control of the New World—had in her struggles for the people acquired power and privileges with which to uphold the people's cause and, already in the eighteenth century had become both strong and powerful. She was, in the eyes of such leaders of revolt as Juárez, a survival from a hated age, a symbol, almost alone upstanding, of the cast-off monarchical régime, Juárez set out to destroy her.

Succession to the presidency in Mexico is far from being by popular election. Benito Juárez, by his mere signature, brought into being the Constitution of 1857 which seized ecclesiastical property comprising universities, schools, hospitals, orphanages, in fact charitable organizations of all sorts—and there were many—notably many good schools. There was in Mexico at the beginning of the nineteenth century a lower proportion of illiterates than in England at that period. The Catholic Church had done her work of instruction well and thoroughly. Now, Benito, with a fine disregard of their feelings and a horde of mercenaries, threw onto the streets of Mexico and other cities, the poor school children, the old, the sick, the orphaned; the Church had sheltered them, so much the worse for them—the Church was to go.

His anti-religious Constitution, proposed as law to an unrepresented people, brought about civil war.

Two Conservative presidents in succession, Zuloaga and Miramón then began the work of reconstruction. The United States espoused the cause of Benito Juárez who returned to power.

Under Juárez, the ruin and impoverishment of Mexico became so entire that the unhappy country was unable to meet its foreign debts and in 1863 the French sent an expedition against it.

The French were bewildered and amazed at the state of things they found in the once flourishing country. At their suggestion Mexico now adopted the idea of a yet other form of government, the imperial one: the throne was offered to the ill-fated Maximilian, brother of the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria. The United States again intervened and again gave their support to Juárez. Maximilian was dethroned and shot at Querétaro. His unfortunate wife, the Princess Charlotte of Belgium, had returned to Europe to beg for help from Napoleon III who had, by then, withdrawn his troops from Mexico: she lost her reason and lingered, a tragic wraith, at the château of Laeken outside Brussels till 1927.

Maximilian, it must be owned, dogged by the ill-luck of his house and still more by his weakness of principle, had brought about his own ruin. He had arrived from Vienna primed with Josephist theories—those of the ignoble Joseph II, brother of Marie Antoinette of France—and had chosen to side against the Conservative element in the wild and distracted country he aspired to rule. He had accepted the anti-clerical Constitution of 1857 and the policy of Juárez, the very man who was to bring about Maximilian's death.

Juárez came back to power for five years.

His successor and disciple, Lerdo de Tejada, completed the ruin of Church and country; his anti-religious despotism and his dilapidation of public funds brought about yet another revolution and the presidency was seized by Porfirio Diaz.

Under this man of iron, Mexico was to know thirty-three years of comparative material peace and prosperity. An administrator of genius he set his unhappy country once more upon its feet. He ignored, if he did not alter, the anti-religious Laws of Reform; the fifteen millions over whom he ruled rejoiced once more in the free exercise of the national religion: hospitals and schools flourished once again, church bells rang, trade and commerce prospered.

Himself a Catholic though not a "practising" one, but destined to die at peace with the Church, Diaz nevertheless allowed the small but ambitious anti-clerical faction of his native land to hold its own: he was all unthinkingly working for the paganizing of Mexico. The Catholic element, on the other hand, allowed itself somewhat weakly to be ousted from any share in the Government.

In the welter of Mexican history, motives, actions, and results seem almost inextricably mixed. Porfirio Diaz was a good ruler. Yet social injustice now began to weigh upon the Indians reduced to ignorance by the anti-religious activities of former presidents and the consequent exile of the missionaries and clergy who had both taught and defended them. At the end of

Diaz's long rule it is alleged ten out of the fifteen millions of Mexicans were unable to read or write. The Press, too closely censored, was unable to counterbalance the causes which once again led to the ruin of a president.

The Panama Canal, begun by Lesseps, had been completed by America in 1913, and opened in 1914. A revolution, believed by Mexico to have been fomented by their richer northern neighbor, afforded the United States an opportunity for intervention in the Isthmus of Panama and a subsequent annexation of land to each side of the canal. Porfirio Diaz, noting the trend of events, had foreseen the further threat to his country and feared that Mexico might in its turn fall under the dominion of America.

Hastily he had acquired funds in Europe with which to buy out all American railroad shareholders: he favored the English petroleum interests, to the detriment of the American oil industry. His fate was sealed.

He was growing old, his health was impaired. Madero, son of an immensely rich landowner of Coahuila, saw his chance of ending the long rule of the Man of Iron; American oil interests assured him of financial support against Diaz, the backer of the English petroleum companies. The Indian population, now dispossessed as it was, had no interest in and no wish for revolution: Madero made this Indian population his pretext. Enrolling it in his improvised armies under the leadership of bandits, he set his troops loose in town and countryside while supplies of arms and ammunition poured in from America which had mobilized on the frontier. Porfirio Diaz, actually from his sick-bed, had to come to terms with Madero. He capitulated, had to take train for Vera Cruz where a popular ovation awaited him. He had nevertheless to sail for Europe where he died.

Madero lasted three years. He was unable to govern. The bandits, his friends of yesterday and then in his pay, now devastated the country. Madero, frightened of fulfilling his too-liberal promises to his financial backers, lost their support. In February of 1913 he was attacked by revolutionaries in the capital itself which then became a battlefield. American money—without which he was powerless—had failed him and had passed over to his adversaries. He was captured and, on his way to the prison of the Penitenciaria, a stray ball of one of the triumphant rebels ended his life.

In all the wild confusion of the time, the party of law and order yet succeeded in electing to the presidency a strong, honest, and upright man, Victoriano Huerta. Recognized by the British and other European Governments, his only desire was to govern well and wisely. For the first time for many a long day the new President opened Congress in the name of God and with a public prayer for peace and justice. The masses were wild with enthusiasm: here was a man who would govern according to their own hearts and who spoke the language of the old sane, God-fearing Mexico.

Woodrow Wilson was to intervene. He never recognized the government of Victoriano Huerta and when in 1913 Carranza, in revolt against Huerta, seized the presidency, Wilson supported Carranza.

At the end of Carranza's ten years of rule "The Revolution," the reddest of Mexican papers, thus resumes those ten years. "Let us say frankly, the Carrancista Revolution is ending in disaster: an immense and bloody shroud, an Inquisitioner's robe in which for ten years the people of Mexico have been enveloped."

Yet another constitution was drafted incorporating the penal laws of Benito Juárez which even he had never written into his constitution, regarding them more as emergency measures, a species of martial law. A faction, led by Obregón, added to these laws additions so monstrous that no one then thought of applying them. That was to come later.

Carranza certainly endeavored at one time in some slight measure to protect the Catholics of his native land. He also renounced the financial protection extended to him by the United States. He engineered a measure by which American-held oil deposits in Mexico were nationalized and doubled the tax on the exportation of petroleum: once assured of the presidency he turned his back on American financiers. In this he followed the example of certain predecessors and endured their doom.

CHAPTER IV

THE foregoing *aperçu* of Mexican story, lengthy perhaps to read, in reality extremely abbreviated, is necessary in order to understand in some measure the extraordinary events which now burst upon the tranquil novitiate at El Llano.

Miguel Pro might have supposed that from the stress and fret of public affairs he would be free for at least the duration of those first years of study which, for a Jesuit, follow the taking of his first vows.

He had pronounced his vows on the feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1913. The rejoicings, Father Dragon tells us, were of a quite intimate nature; no member of his family was able to be present at this first solemn step in his career. The times had become too troubled for traveling, the revolution of 1910 had spread, broadened out like a river in flood and was working havoc with as little reason or coherence.

The noise of this havoc was not suited to the steady pursuit of knowledge; and the noise grew. The air was full of it, vague, confusing, alarming. Suddenly—a bolt from the blue—Miguel heard that his father, the much-respected man of business, the boss, the controller of Miguel's friends, the peons, had fled from Saltillo. Fled. . . . The word was at first sight unbelievable, yet it had to be believed. The Señora, Miguel's much-loved mother, too, was in flight, in another direction, with the younger brothers and sisters. It seemed as if the father of the family had forsaken it.

Time was to show such a flight as only too usual, too explicable—a mere commonplace of the inevitable. Miguel, who knew his people, quietly awaited enlightenment.

But his mother, in flight somewhere in the direction of Guadalajara and ill, as he heard, and in charge of the children. . . . That did strike to the very roots of his heart, that did demand a terrific trust in God. He was powerless, but God was powerful; that alone can have sustained him in so unexampled a position.

Miguel Pro has, as far as I know, left no record of this time, no letters, no memorandum. But those who remember it say he never, as he himself would have expressed it, went under. He continued resolutely at his job till better news filtered through the countrysides, by that time absolutely seething with marauding troops. The Señora Pro, he heard, had reached Guadalajara; his father was safe—somewhere.

The latter's story was that of countless, one might almost say of *all* proprietors or possessors of anything of value whom misfortune brought within range of the so-called army patrolling Mexico. A troop or detachment or band would reach a small town or village and immediately round up the inhabitants; the richest were soon sorted out and ticketed, then their wealth requisitioned. Horses, arms, above all money, were demanded; if any of these things were withheld the commandant—as likely as not a liberated convict—had a short way with the recalcitrant: all their belongings that could be located were taken and the owners strung up or shot.

The first part of this programme was gone through for the Señor Pro; by some means unknown he had evaded the second and had escaped into the night. (His wife had already fled with their children.) They were all meanwhile, of course, ruined.

It was about this time, too, at El Llano—the testing of trial never failing Miguel Pro—that he felt the first symptoms of an illness that was to be his constant companion almost to the end. Acute internal pain made its first mysterious appearance. It was nothing, Miguel told himself, some passing trifle. But the relentless thing came back and back and even he had to own it was probably *something*. For the moment there was nothing to be done, no possibility, for instance, of going to the capital to consult a specialist, so why talk about the thing at all? He was not infrequently in agony but practically no one could have guessed it; was he not the wag, the almost professional jester of the novitiate?

Add to that, that a professor fell ill in the house and could not be replaced; Miguel was told off to do it! Gallantly, all sails set, so to speak, he undertook the somewhat anomalous task; at any rate he could give his pupils something to occupy them.

It was at the end of a May, peaceful and lovely as other Mays in that lost corner of Michoacán, that certain rumors, disquieting in a special way to the Jesuit house, began to take form and substance. The troublous times were merging into something more definite than the nondescript guerrilla warfare of Carranza, Zapata and fellow bandits in league against Victoriano Huerta. In a word, a religious persecution, more or less organized, but entirely effectual, had begun.

The novitiate possessed an orchard or long meadow running down to a canal and bordered by gigantic eucalyptus trees; it was a place in itself lovely, hallowed by memories, and dear to all, not least to Miguel Pro.

For though a wag and, as a good many of his companions believed, an entirely light-hearted one, he was also a poet. Many a time he must have caught himself dreaming by that scarcely moving water in the shade cast by those many-tinted glancing leaves of the eucalyptus trees, that canopy of whispering gold and fluttering green, those sheltering trunks of so sober a gray that at midday refreshed the eye tired of too much sunlight, at nightfall stood faint and tall against that other splendor of the southern moon. That dreaming would be sharply checked; but a poet is a poet, in a novitiate or out, and no devotion to the Rule or austerity of obedience can alter the natural flowing of the tides in a young man's soul. Miguel's duty, his job, was to study, to teach—in the absence of the professor—to play and to go briskly about these doings. But he must have found time somehow, and somewhere, for the thought and fancy that were to flower in his verse.

It was this spot, at any rate, that the novitiate, at recreation time, used as their common-room. And it was here, looking out over the canal to where the stretching fields, dotted with peacefully grazing cattle, lay inundated with light, that the young Religious heard the definitely documented story of persecution. Some of their elders, expelled from the town of Durango, had escaped to tell the story in person.

Beyond the quiet canal the pastoral countryside blossomed under the first rains of May. It was hard for the novitiate to realize that, beyond that gentle horizon, their country was actually given over to scenes which Pius XI, in his distant Rome, was to stigmatize as exceeding the most bloody persecutions of the Roman emperors.

But facts were facts. At Saltillo, Miguel's home town, the Jesuit Fathers had suffered worse things than those related in the orchard by the fugitives from Durango.

A certain "General," a former bandit, had possessed himself of the town—he could neither read nor write but knew what he wanted. Five of the Fathers of St. John Nepomucene, where in the happier days of peace Miguel and his family had so often heard Mass, were made prisoners of a leader who quite frequently diverted himself by mutilating his "catch."

This leader had begun by demanding a million pesos—the Catholic Church was rich, let its ministers fork out! But the Jesuit house was *not* rich, or could not, at any rate, produce a million pesos. The five Fathers were actually strung up and were only saved by the last moment intervention of powerful friends. The marks of their injuries they are destined to bear for life. Dumped finally into a cattle wagon they were sent in charge of drunken guards to the American frontier. On the arrival of the Carrancista troops at the neighboring Guadalajara, it was impossible to doubt that some such similar fate would befall the Society of Jesus in that town.

It is difficult to know precisely when it was that Miguel had first felt a longing for a like martyrdom, or for any form of martyrdom. But a companion of his at El Llano in some unpublished notes "on the life of Father Pro during the Carrancista epoch" asserts quite simply, and as it were absent-mindedly, that the news of their fellow-Jesuits' sufferings quickened in Miguel Pro "that ardent wish which he felt to suffer persecution for justice' sake." This "ardent wish" never subsequently left him. There were months later on when, far from his country of which he was passionately fond, he was given work which was uncongenial to him and in which, indeed, he was frankly unhappy. At such a time that ardent wish of his may, very wonderfully, have been the human element that, apart from his intense spiritual existence, sustained him.

Meanwhile President Wilson had sent cruisers to Vera Cruz, the only port through which munitions from Europe might have reached Huerta. Deprived of such help, the latter was gradually reduced to impotence, while Carranza's forces were cynically devastating the country he aspired to rule. Already, in Zamoran districts, these forces were paralyzing normal existence, actually preventing the running of the railways. El Llano became practically cut off.

By the end of July grave disorders occurred in the town of Zamora within walking distance of El Llano. The *jefe*, head of the federal garrison—the federal being the governmental or Huerta party—found himself surrounded by Carrancista troops with no possibility of being relieved. He was forced to make terms with Pulido, the leader, but subsequently resisted his demand for the usual "loans," that is, exactions from the richest citizens and from the clergy. The *jefe* was shot out of hand.* The garrison, on hearing of its *jefe's* fate, rushed furiously to arms and after a terrific affray ejected the revolutionaries. Pulido, wounded, escaped, and was able later to join up with the "main column" of Carranza's forces.

While all this blood and thunder was let loose not twenty miles away, the novitiate at El Llano remained in comparative tranquillity, the days passing almost peacefully. For it was only the Superiors of the house who knew with certainty of the dangers threatening it. They kept their knowledge and its extraordinary worries to themselves. Things might improve and for the moment there seemed nothing to be done.

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* Probably by Pulido himself. It was the custom of these maniacs in power quite frequently to do their own executing—one egregious general, for instance, sprained his wrist shooting prisoners at close range in a courtyard.

The end of the term was approaching with its examination.

The examinations over, the novitiate was free to concentrate its natural relief and consequent exuberance on the preparations for a peculiarly thrilling centenary. On August 7, a hundred years would have passed since Pope Pius VII, the prisoner of Napoleon I, had, after his return from captivity in France, restored to the world the Society of Jesus by the Bull "Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum."*

The annulment of the Brief of Clement XIV, "Dominus ac Redemptor," and the restoration to the Society of all its prerogatives and privileges had been an epoch-making event. It may be imagined that Jesuit houses celebrated its first centenary with enthusiasm. The novitiate of El Llano was not behind hand in its preparations.

Circumstances certainly were not over-encouraging for such rejoicings, in fact they were excessively dramatic. The Superiors of the house still kept their anxiety to themselves. The novices, on their side, kept *their* counsel. They may have thought "least said soonest mended" and that it was best not to affect to see what the Superiors did not discuss with them. But if the Rector's kindly intention was that of keeping them in ignorance, as well as un-alarmed, his intention had only a *succès d'estime*: it was scarcely possible, indeed, to keep from a body of alert young students a sense of the perils in the midst of which they were living.

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* The Society, for two and a half centuries the cherished of popes, kings, and peoples, suddenly found itself in the middle of the Eighteenth century blown upon by the most furious winds of adversity. Like Aristides the Just, it was perhaps *too* just, its foreign missions too vast, its colleges, schools and churches too flourishing; the century of revolt was tired of its long-established, its incorruptible rightness. Liberal ministers of autocratic courts—notably the Bourbon courts—found the Society constantly in their paths; they set about destroying it, incidentally helping in the long run the destruction of their own royal houses. They demanded with overwhelming pressure and finally exacted from Clement XIV the suppression of the Society of Jesus. But it was not destined finally to perish.

As early as the middle of July, at any rate, one of the novices who kept a diary at the time had noted that for some days previous to the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, on July 16, there had been something un-normal in the house: "We noticed that this something unusual was especially noticeable in the wardrobe." He continued that, on coming in from a walk, they found to the great amazement of them all, secular clothes laid out on their beds. He adds: "At four o'clock of that same day there passed along the cart-way leading to the road more than forty revolutionaries, but they did not come in."

The Zamora incident—that of the shooting of the *jefe*—was also entered in the same diary. So that the nearness of danger became thoroughly well realized in the novitiate.

On the night of August 4, the house was finally invaded.

"For several days previous," say the unpublished Notes, "all had been activity and joy." (The Centenary celebrations were approaching.) So that it is evident the novitiate suffered from no undue pusillanimity.

"The night was suddenly terrible." About midnight, or a little later, twenty-two Carrancistas, as well mounted as they were armed, rode up. They penetrated into the porter's lodge and forced him to open the gates to them. They then—in the way familiar to us in this country from our acquaintance with the most unlikely "movies"

—galloped down the roadway leading to the door of the hacienda, firing as they went, effected an entrance with the help of axes, broke up furniture as they penetrated into the house, cut the telephone wires and demanded the account books.

At the sound of the first shots—the realization of the nightmare of months—the Minister (the Father responsible for the material well-being of the community) sprang out of bed and went and called the Father Rector and a lay brother, a veteran of the wars of Maximilian, whom they found already on foot. They made their way to the big door of the church which abuts on the hacienda and there took up their stand so as to prevent—or to try with their lives, if need be, to prevent—any sacrilege.

None, mercifully, was attempted. The "account books" had probably given no very great results. The braves, having completed as much damage as possible, just for the fun of the thing apparently, and having looted anything eatable, with more movie-like shouts and flourishes galloped off to the unfortunate neighboring property of Miraflores.

The night *had* been terrible but El Llano might consider itself extraordinarily lucky. For the *cabecilla,* or chief of the band, had been fairly humane. No one had been shot or hanged. His followers had been about to burst into the novitiate itself when he had called them off.

A stray bullet, however, had passed through the sacristy and an outside wall and had fallen into Father Minister's quarters. Miguel Pro, on his way to Mass next morning, found it there—one wonders with what precise feelings.

The Centenary was celebrated two days later and with the utmost solemnity and rejoicings. Miguel had undertaken the direction of those in charge of the decorations which were to be elaborate in the extreme. He himself had done a number of "the most delicate drawings" and all the allusive inscriptions, the allusions being, of course, to the glories of the Society of Jesus and its Restoration in particular. In the afternoon and evening of the great day were held two "Academies" or entertainments; in the afternoon certain benefactors from "outside" were present; in the evening only the community. The great patio was hung—under the direction of Miguel—with Venetian lanterns, festoons, flags and his own drawings and inscriptions. Of the two Academies the diary gives scarcely more than the programmes. Miguel Pro recited, "the fine composition of Father Luis Martin, S.J. on the foundation of the Society," but his guitar does not seem to have figured. The Notes state that he was during the ensuing Venetian fête "the gaiety of his companions."

There is something poignant about this evening—the quiet but acute anxiety of the Superiors—for matters were nearing a climax—the light-hearted valor of their charges whose thoughts at the evening's close *seemed* at any rate, to center in the fireworks and rockets.

It all ended, says the diarist with a charming quaintness, "in joy, that joy founded on the tranquillity of a good conscience and which Religious keep even in the midst of perils and sufferings." The idea of their peril certainly does not seem to have spoilt the evening . . . still less the more solemn celebrations of the day —High Mass in the church "profusely lighted" and decked in its "best gala," the solemn procession and enthronement of the statue of the Sacred Heart and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

This was the last of rejoicings of El Llano for many a day to come.

The very next morning—one of the "mornings after" any special happiness which life not infrequently provides—the worst sort of news was received. All foreign priests and school-teachers were to be turned out of Guadalajara, the second greatest city of Mexico and the local capital. Other decrees affecting the religious rights of the people were at the same time made public.

Mexico like other countries, our own included, was full of foreign religious and teaching orders. The Jesuit Rector at Guadalajara was a Frenchman, Father Decorme; he immediately flew the French flag and applied to the French Consul for protection. The flag was entirely disregarded by the Carrancistas and the French Consul was of less than no use.

In Zamora, the neighboring town, already no priest dared wear soutane or tonsure.

On the day following arrived some of the Marist Fathers to ask advice and concert with the Superiors of El Llano as to what was to be done with their two novitiates. The Marists were encountered at the gates by the Jesuit novices who noticed that the strangers had saluted them "with a certain attention and not without signs of a certain agitation."

There followed a telegram from Guadalajara announcing the arrival of the Jesuit Superior and all his "foreign subjects."

The house was now filled with an activity sadly different to that in which Miguel Pro had written his "allusive" inscriptions and had wreathed the already much-wreathed patio with flags and "lamps of Venice."

An inventory was hastily taken of the library treasures which were removed to the cellars under the outlying carpenter's shop; certain ornaments and valuable pieces of furniture belonging to the Dávalos family (benefactors of the house) and the most valuable pictures, were confided to various friends in Zamora.

For several days past the Rector, in spite of the dangers of the time and of all difficulties, had made journeys, not infrequently on foot, to Zamora, to obtain any information possible regarding the situation. One can imagine his perplexity and anxiety—responsible for an entire novitiate of young Religious, some of them scarcely more than school-boys, entirely cut off from communication with their friends, and coming very largely from outside the radius of his own danger zone. A watch had for days been kept in the tower "and not abandoned for a moment."

On August 13, news came through that the neighboring town of Morelia had been taken by the Carrancistas under Gertrudis Sanchez, former bailiff of the hacienda of Agua Nueva near Saltillo, an uneducated man, like most of his fellow "Generals," and with a reputation for the utmost ferocity and lack of the smallest humanity or compassion. A couple of columns of his troops were expected in Zamora itself. Obregón, the former Governor of Guadalajara, at the head of troops was marching toward Mexico City.

August 14, eve of the feast of the Assumption, dawned upon gravely resolved Superiors. Their charges, while unable to repress the thrill of excitement at the nearness of danger and all the activities in the house that announced it, were by no means prepared for the blow which was now to fall on them. The morning saw the removal of door-plates from the various rooms belonging to the Jesuit Fathers, of name-lists in the porter's lodge, in fact of all lists in any rooms, of the statue of Our Lady, Queen of Novices—in a word, of any indication of the house being a "religious" one.

In the afternoon there was no reunion of the community, none had been announced in the refectory or after spiritual reading—a certain feeling of tensity was felt by the novitiate. It deepened almost to consternation when in the later afternoon the big bell of the house summoned them to the chapel.

"What was not our surprise and wonder," says the diary, "when we saw that the Father Master-of-Novices, so worn out by the continual fatigues of the last days, was going to address us? what our sensations on seeing him, grave and majestic, ascend the steps and turn to the Gospel side of the altar?"

Grave he might well be: a terrific responsibility lay on him and the Rector of El Llano and they had reached a desperate decision. The house must be disbanded; to do otherwise was to ask for peril, quite possibly for death, for the young men in their care.

These latter must now be sent out into the thick of physical danger—there was no other possible solution. Who knew indeed—the novice master might well ask himself—to what he was consigning these happy, charming or trying boys, these sons of his, whom he had guided, for whom he had prayed, thought, perhaps at times anguished—for not all novices can be perfect, not all defects and difficulties can be laid down on crossing the threshold of a novitiate door.

They were not, of course, to be sent out into a world of mercenaries and murderers and abandoned, left to shift for themselves. The plan was for them to disperse into different neighboring haciendas, into Zamora where various families were anxious to receive them, till such time—and as soon, naturally, as might be—as they could reassemble in some place of safety.

But how much might lie between this plan and its fulfillment, between the starting out from the gates of El Llano and the reaching of a final goal as yet uncertain and indeed, so far, unknown! These young men were to be priests, but meanwhile though they were leading a religious life it had been combined with some of the sheltered irresponsibility of studenthood. How would they fare, how confront and pass through who knew what danger, what pitfalls, all the possible horrors, in fact, of the unknown? One's heart bleeds for this novice-master at El Llano.

He began on this afternoon, so momentous for El Llano, by enumerating the precautions that had been taken to avert the troubles threatening the community, went on to announce the "ultimate and dolorous" decision to which its heads were forced finally to come. The plan was propounded, with the best means of carrying it out. Advice most practical followed. He ended "by suggesting to all the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles."

Later in the evening, at the all but final recreation, Father Minister came, we are told, and at once descended to details: each might take with him a book, Rodriguez, for instance, or a manuscript, etc. For some reason (not explained) "of study books, not one," says the diary concisely and as it were regretfully: the fact that mercenary troops might shoot, hang, or even torture one at sight was no reason, the diarist perhaps thought, for not getting on with one's job—one's theology, philosophy, or whatever it might happen to be—in spare moments.

CHAPTER V

AUGUST 15, feast of the Assumption, dawned upon a house already prepared for the exodus of all its younger inhabitants.

One of the advantages of the religious life was made apparent—the novices had very little to take away with them. Almost like the Apostles in the scantiness of what they would have to carry, there was nothing for them to do before leaving but to meet at the last recreation, the morning one.

There they undertook to pray for each other "as good brothers" so that no distance or separation would prevent their union and charity. It was agreed that every day they would each say, for their common perseverance, the ejaculation "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, keep us always in Your holy company": no excess or hysteria in this, just the minimum undertaken, though no doubt they will have *done* a great deal more.

Then there was "every corner" of the house to be regretfully visited, holding, as the diary says, "such happy remembrances in leaving—and for who knew how long?—those much-loved walls."

During the midday meal the "Deo gratias" was said —words the Rector uses when, instead of reading, the community is allowed conversation during a meal. This usually occurs on feast-days only, and occurred too on this occasion. Immediately afterwards the first exiles were to set out, those who had "the furthest to go on a road of suffering." A certain Father Castillo with the very youngest of the house went first.

Lists had been made out so that all knew in what order they were to start; most of them were to wait till after the almost indispensable siesta.

At three-thirty, therefore, another group departed, this time on horseback, the most usual mode of progression and, therefore, unlikely to attract attention. A few moments later Miguel Pro with three others started on foot to find horses at a little distance from the house; Miguel's first destination was the home of a fellow novice named Rios.

It was indeed curious, says the diary, to observe the appearance of them all . . . the mufti or lay attire served out was naturally of a rather haphazard description. Some of the novices looked like "retired captains," others—like Miguel's host-to-be—rather like a "youthful farm laborer on Holy Thursday"; H. Cavero "had the aspect of some ancient director of an orchestra."

Miguel's appearance is not mentioned, but as he was a past master in anything of a theatrical nature, disguise or make-up, possibly he called for less comment than the others.

They departed, at any rate, in small parties, going out through the inhabitants massed round the gates "in anguished silence": the poorest of these inhabitants were witnessing the departure of their Providence on earth.

Zamora, the home of Miguel's companion, was reached chiefly on foot after all, but in safety. Zamora is a walled city founded in the sixteenth century and frequently assaulted by the Chichimec Indians who, later, were converted and baptized by the Franciscan friars. It was, in the fortnight Miguel spent there, a medium-sized country city and a flourishing religious center filled with revolutionary troops under Amaro.

Something between a reign of terror and the city's usual sun-filled somnolence, however, at first prevailed. The troops were not too much in evidence, the streets were still full of white-coated Indians with their giant high-peaked sombreros and colored serapes; it was easy to go quietly at break of day to Mass and to Holy Communion at a public church.

But this did not last. A few days after Miguel's arrival Amaro took entire command; he grew active. He ordered the churches to be closed, priests to be arrested. It became a matter of thought and ingenuity—which Miguel Pro never lacked—to hear Mass or receive the Sacraments, but in spite of his utmost endeavors Miguel went five days without doing either.

On one of these hazardous days he and his companion in trying to find a given spot—a priest's hiding place—had to pass in front of the Hotel Mexico. On its balcony some of Amaro's officers were lounging, they called to each other: "Look at those two priests." . . .

Affecting, of course, not to have heard the remark, Miguel and his friend moved on and made for home. On the way they met two women of the people who saluted them with the utmost respect exclaiming, as they passed, "There go the padrecitos" (young priests). A little further some boys greeted them from afar with loud salutations, "Good-day, Padre; Padre, good-day." It was obvious that in Zamora they were too well-known. They had to abandon their idea of getting to Mass.

The state of the city grew worse. Amaro had warmed to his work. There were continual attacks on private property; imprisonments and executions were every-day occurrences sometimes accompanied with torture. Sacrilege constantly occurred. Popular indignation was intense but the inhabitants were powerless: it was the reign of terror, the real thing. The countryside and neighboring villages were devastated, the fertile Zamoran valley was over-run as by the hordes of another Attila.

On August 20 Amaro, who had taken up his quarters in the house of the Bishop of Zamora, ordered all priests to present themselves before him. As in the phraseology of the Carrancistas the word "priest" covered everyone from the oldest sacristan to the poorest bell-ringer, the young Jesuit novices had to avoid falling into Amaro's clutches. The priests who obeyed him and presented themselves at the house of the Bishop were seized and thrown into prison and not infrequently tortured. The Rector of the Sagrario—the church depending on the cathedral—received a violent blow on the head with a rifle. Amaro himself, in front of his troops, struck with the utmost violence an old and very poor priest to show his men, said he, that the blood of priests was like any other and would dry on the striker's hands. . . .

Miguel Pro, while sharing in the universal horror at such a state of things, was for himself undismayed. He continued to go about as seemed well to him.

Four days after the new edict concerning the priesthood, Miguel, his friend Rios, and three youths of the place, left the town with the object of taking food to some secular priests in hiding outside Zamora, one of these priests being an uncle of Rios. The hiding place was at the foot of a hill, called La Beatilla, in a poor Indian hut; the priests were disguised as peons. With the arrival of food from Zamora the party went a little way up the hill for the meal and had no sooner done so than a party of fifty revolutionaries, on horseback, and in search of other horses, drew up at the just vacated hut below. The hiding party had no resource but to conceal themselves in the tall maize plantation on the hillside, involuntary listeners to the curses, blasphemies and otherwise far from edifying conversation of the horse-stealers.

These latter finally moved on to the neighboring hacienda of Santiaguillo and Miguel and party penetrated further into the hills.

Here they remained hidden all day able to observe from afar, and more or less, the doings of the Carrancistas. At five o'clock the latter passed once more before the little Indian hut hiding place below, leading the fifty horses they had "acquired" since morning.

Later the party was able to eat some food provided by a charitable Indian, whom they met by chance, in one of the most lovely spots in the hills.

When all seemed quiet Miguel, Rios, and another young man, emerged and descended the hill and went quietly back to Zamora.

But it was high time for the Jesuit refugees to leave that unhappy place and to join the bulk of their companions at Guadalajara. It likewise was under the Terror, but it was the second largest town in Mexico, the Pearl of the West, and less dangerous, Superiors judged, than a smaller city.

On August 29, at nightfall, Miguel with the zest with which he did most things—and this one by no means went against the grain—disguised himself once more as a peon, hid his dark head under a "ten-gallon" hat with an immense upstanding crown and put on the loose white linen trousers and the woollen covering, or serape, over his shoulders. Thus attired he was to get out of Zamora, through the streets infested with revolutionaries, and the roads outside almost equally filled with troops.

With a gay courage which is a distinguishing trait of so many of his countrymen and which certainly was peculiarly his, he set out accompanied by a real peon and passed through the gates to a given spot outside; there he was to meet a fellow novice, of the name of Carrillo, and two youths. That first night they spent partly under the brilliant southern sky and partly in a wretched hut. Miguel's host, Rios, had for some reason remained behind at his own home; perhaps because of the constant supervision under which he suffered. He succeeded later in escaping into the mountainous country of Michoacán and rejoining his companions.

The latter meanwhile had, after three days of alternate taking covert and walking, succeeded in reaching a station at Negrete and from there reached Guadalajara by train without any further misadventure beyond a plague of vermin from which they all suffered very considerably. . . .

One may pause here to ask, as no doubt many readers will ask themselves, how it was that in a country where the bulk of the population is Catholic and devout, the troops or army could lend themselves to such an extraordinary persecution. The answer is simple.

There was in Mexico no regular army. Such troops as existed were chiefly recruited from the prisons, or press-ganged from the lowest ranks of the people or the floating foreign population. Their military chiefs were, one may say, almost without exception, bandits or desperadoes. It was almost exactly a hundred years since the Spanish dominion had ended and the power of the clergy had been tampered with: many of the poorer Mexicans had reverted, in consequence, to ignorance and their native characteristics. And beneath the virtues and discipline induced by Christianity, the Mexican race, descendants of the fierce and war-like Aztec, is itself extremely fierce. To few peoples was the restraining influence of religion more necessary, but the fact was never taken into account by those who seized power in the country. They persisted as blindly in identifying the Church with the old hated conception of the State.

And if we recall that the Church had in former times possessed great wealth, which the revolutionaries still attributed to her, we can begin dimly to understand the attacks upon her ministers. That this wealth had been, for the very greatest part, used in the service of God and the people, it was convenient to forget.

It was to Guadalajara, likewise, that Miguel's mother and younger brothers and sister had already fled: he was now to find them there within an easy walk of his own refuge in that city.

But the circumstances of the family were very different from any to which they were accustomed or with which Miguel associated them.

They were in a poor sort of house in the rather outlying street of Prisciliano Sánchez, Number 771. There, it was said, the Señora Pro helped to eke out a living by taking in washing. . . . Of Señor Pro, the father of the family, little was known beyond that he was still believed to be in safety.

Miguel's heart was wrung by these straits in which he found his family and, above all, his mother. But she too had courage. All she had been able to bring away from the comfortable, charming home at Saltillo was a small image of the Sacred Heart. "As far as I am concerned,"* she told him, "I am glad of it, glad to have had to leave everything for the sake of Christ Our Lord."

He could, of course, do nothing material for her or the others. But he was able at least, here in exile, to give them his time, or a great deal of it.

For there now began for the novitiate, or such of it as was gathered in the big city, a life which, had it not been that they had chosen the religious life and wanted, so to speak, to get on with it, must have been to high-spirited young men rather in the nature of a lark.

There was the ever-present possibility of arrest, of who knew what eventuality. A certain routine was pursued up to a point. The novices rose at 4:45 and went out in search of Mass as at Zamora; at seven o'clock Office was said in common. At eight was breakfast and for the rest of the morning there was no possibility of a fixed programme. Usually there was reading in common again at two and then the siesta till the great heat was past. At night devotions and points for meditation.

Between whiles those who could do so worked, but on the whole there seems to have been a great going and coming, a pretty regular exchange of visits between the scattered brethren, walks, excursions to shrines. There were reunions of the exiles as frequent as possible and first, of course, with the families of those whose homes were in the place; visits to the Dávalos—those benefactors of El Llano whose pictures, etc., had been hidden by the Fathers before leaving.

The fact that his people were plunged into poverty and living almost—if not quite—as poor folk, by no means prevented Miguel from taking his fellow novices to the shabby house. At a pinch he took them there to meals—possibly oblivious of the question of ways and means. . . .

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* In so far as the facts have reached us, it seems certain that Señora Pro was mistaken in attributing the family misfortunes at Saltillo to the cause of religion.

His mother, brothers and sister returned these visits. There were, even, certain festivities; the first anniversary of the First Vows of the diarist—a native of Guadalajara—was celebrated by his father inviting the entire novitiate to a *refresco* which seems to have lasted the entire afternoon; Miguel Pro is mentioned as having performed on the mandolin.

On one occasion there were bicycle races in the Avenida de las Palmas in which one Jimenez by name—a Jesuit novice and a novice on a bicycle—not unnaturally ran into a tree and "shed some blood." These young men were, of course, never in clerical clothes and passed for students.

When the first novelty of all this had worn off and the realities of the situation began to weigh on them, more especially on those without the consolation of having their family in the city, Miguel emerged once more as the joy-maker, almost, one might say, the mascot of the band. Over and over again if anyone were suspected of being dejected or discouraged, Miguel would be on his way to that particular brother's place of residence before anyone else had had time to think of it. He took with him his guitar or mandolin, his own incomparable verve, his personal suffering—for his family's distress—and often his own physical pain. In ten minutes the dejected one was laughing; in twenty he was gay; at the end of the half hour Miguel, laughing himself, would depart leaving the other radiating good spirits. It was impossible to resist Miguel's tonic influence or his outrageous merriment hiding the intense inner charity that prompted it.

Every day he managed to see every one of his companions, got them to go out with him or in some way cheered and helped.

On September 9, our diary mentions the arrival of Miguel and his sister, Ana Maria, to borrow an umbrella for the latter as it had just started to rain. They brought news which the family had just received—definite assurance of the safety of their father.

Ten days later it was announced that a heavy fine would be imposed on any priest saying Mass. It is characteristic of Miguel Pro that on that particular day he is mentioned not only as compromising himself by assisting at Mass but, as subsequently at the home of the diarist, having sung and "played the clown." "We spent," says the diary, "a very joyful time—*un rato muy alegre*." Such was Miguel's response to tyranny.

On the following day, again, in the evening he and a friend gave a "pantomimic performance." There is no doubt that had Miguel's religious vocation failed him he could have made a fortune on the stage—his auditors are unanimous on that point.

On the morning after he was, with companions, again at Mass, and this time to serve it "in soutane and sash." . . .

Owing to the expulsion of foreign religious orders, and the repression of the native clergy, the administration of the Sacraments became difficult. Miguel wished ardently that he were already a priest; but he did what he could. Father Dragon tells us, for instance, that hearing of the illness of a forsaken old woman, Miguel, aged twenty-three, rushed off, spent the night by her bedside praying and helping her to pray: she died kissing the crucifix he held to her lips.

Matters were now going from bad to worse. On October 27, the Bishop said Mass in the private residence of a certain Rafael Ruiz Diaz in the presence of five hundred of the faithful. The house was suddenly surrounded by revolutionary mounted guards and all present placed under arrest.

Nothing further could be done about it, however, for the people assembled in force. Angry groups surrounded the guards and the house with cries of defiance to the constitutionalists and of homage to the Church: those in power feared a too just rising of the inhabitants and were forced to set free the Bishop and the congregation.

News at last, on the day following, came through from a Jesuit house in the United States via Laredo on the frontier. This event was celebrated in the usual high-hearted fashion at the home of the diary-writer. An "academy," or entertainment, was improvised and came off that evening, the diarist and his father taking turns to "hold the door" in case of spies. It was generally believed that within a day or so the novices, scattered in various houses in Guadalajara, would get their marching orders and would re-assemble—somewhere. Feelings, therefore, must have been mixed during what appears to have been a very festive evening: religious life was to be resumed—but in exile; the novitiate was to turn its back on its country from the sheer impossibility of remaining in it *as* a novitiate. And the plight of the country was so tragic that hearts must have bled, indeed, on the eve of leaving it for a quite indefinite time, cast forth by those who would have none of them.

That night a telegram, in code one supposes, announced the coming of a certain Ramírez with orders and money for an immediate departure. On the evening following he arrived, and the next day, October 2, at seven o'clock in the morning, the first group of exiles met at the station of Guadalajara to entrain for Los Gatos in California, U. S. A.

Amongst them was Miguel who was leaving not only the homeland he loved really with passion, but his mother, brothers and sister, in rather desperate poverty.

All of them were at the station to see Miguel go. It was, humanly speaking, a dreadful moment when the train started on its thousand-odd mile journey and Miguel, from the carriage-window, waved back at the group, and the much-loved, now toil-worn figure of his mother, she who was as brave as himself. He was never to see her again.

CHAPTER VI

THEY were on their way to *Yankeelandia* as they called it. Fourteen of them bound for the American, the English-speaking novitiate or House of Formation at Los Gatos. Probably they knew no English at all.

The journey was without incident beyond that of their being borne remorselessly through their wonderland of a country further and further north into exile. Almost at the last came the desert and the red-blossomed tamarisks and humped cactus. Then tragic country between the Gulf of California and desolate mountains, the Sierra Madre Occidental. This was Sonora, the northernmost and wildest of Mexican States with mining camps alternating with splendid old Spanish presidios. And at last the boundary between Sonora and Arizona in the new, strange America.

The boundary between Mexico and the United States is a barbed wire fence in the main street of Nogales 3,000 feet up in the Patagonian mountains.

At Los Gatos was a warm welcome for the queerly attired foreign brothers from Mexico, that strange, tragic, lovely land so difficult for the kindly American Jesuits, if they had never been there, even to visualize, still more difficult to understand.

And how can North America have struck the intensely Latin, intensely southern travelers? True that they were really on soil that had once been theirs—California was ceded to the United States in 1848—that Los Gatos was in the very heart of the country of the missions, Santa Barbara with its wonderful old cloistered mission house, Santa Clara, San Francisco itself not so very far away. All these the famous Franciscan friars had planted with adobe mission houses and churches whose Spanish façades might still recall to Mexican novices their vanished country.

But the Anglo-Saxon mentality, the American outlook, would have struck coldly on their shrinking senses after their long and no doubt arduous journey just skirting danger all the way, but for two things and those supremely vital, the bond of fellowship in their great Society and the all-embracing bond of charity.

But even so, with all the hospitality and kindly sympathy of their hosts, the position was difficult. The Los Gatos house was already filled with its own novices: the addition of fourteen Mexicans must have caused a considerable upheaval.

Still, all was somehow arranged and the new arrivals set to work at the studies begun at far-off El Llano. They tried working in the library but their lack of books suitable to Spanish-speaking students was regrettably apparent. Why, oh why, had they not brought them from El Llano! Father Minister had not foreseen *this*. All they possessed between them was one Spanish grammar. . . . And they began to find, or think, themselves in the way in the library—certainly no one else caused them to feel it.

Finally the kindly authorities set apart a top floor where they slept and worked, and there for a year Miguel, with his companions, managed to get books and to study.

Miguel, it need scarcely be said, who had to bear not only the same exile as the others, but the troubles of his own people and always his now quite established ill health, was as gay as before. He tried his hand, with success, at catechizing stray American children in some species of language he made them understand, and even gypsies met on the roadside did not escape his attentions. The gypsies liked them, seemed to be going to remember the first accounts they had ever heard of Who had made them and other astonishing facts. He won the childrens' hearts by rewarding *their* attention with sweets.

There seemed no hope of going home again. The revolutionary leaders of Mexico had inevitably fallen foul of each other and by the end of September the fact was known to the public. Mexico City was the scene of constant pillage, each leader claiming supremacy. Then Villa beat a retreat northwards ravaging the country as he went and exchanging his loot for arms on the United States frontier. Zapata, in the South, was trying to rouse the Indians. Carranza retired to Vera Cruz till assisted by Obregón he, later, in December, 1916, succeeded in getting himself "elected" to the presidency, that is, of course, he was able to seize it.

Huerta meanwhile had died at El Paso on the far north-east frontier of the Rio Grande with words on his lips of pardon for his enemy. Wilson, as we know, had "recognized" Carranza, but so precipitately that Europe hesitated to follow for some time. Carranza elaborated, then later caused the famous Constitution of Querétaro to be voted. It was a solid defiance to the rights of God and man. No stranger was allowed to possess "anything" in Mexico. Religious vows were forbidden. All ecclesiastical property was to belong to the State. Priests had "no right" to exercise their ministry and had no civic rights at all. Hundreds of priests and some bishops were exiled, *two thousand* Catholic schools were closed.

Altogether it was scarcely the moment to try to re-establish the house of studies of El Llano. After much anxiety and debate the Superiors decided to send their charges to Jesuit houses in Spain. It was across an ocean, but Spain was the ancient mother-country of Mexico, it had left Mexico its language, architecture, culture and customs. The novices would be less exiles there than anywhere else. They owed untold gratitude to their American hosts of Los Gatos and those who survive have not forgotten it. But, as anarchy at home in Mexico did not mend but threatened to become somewhat permanent, it was felt that residence in Spain offered the best solution of a desperate problem.

Once more, therefore, a little band of sixteen was to cross, like their fathers of old, the Spanish Main. Like the great Fray Bartolomé they were to sail the seas, but not this time to go to the Spanish Court to plead the cause of their country, for that country had cast off, in the course of its own evolution, the protecting hand of the Most Catholic Majesty. Still, they may well have known something of the feelings of those old days, of those great-hearted missioners, though they were to travel by nothing more romantic than a liner and not in the high-decked, proudly swelling galleons of their forerunners. They were flying from their land to which they might not preach the Gospel of Christ, but it was their dearest hope to go back to do so when obedience permitted.

They left via El Paso—that Texas refuge of Mexican exiles where Huerta was to die—for New Orleans where they had a day's rest. The heat was, on this occasion, excruciating, while the only food of the travelers was bread and cheese. They had to go by Florida to Cuba and from there tranship to New York. They were attired once more in the strangest of "civil" clothes; they were utterly at sea even on dry land in what to them were outlandish places and had much unpleasant adventure as, at Havana, losing the one amongst them who carried money and tickets. They were herded into a waiting room till their companion found them—after four hours.

Still at the end of July they reached Granada. Miguel Pro was to spend there five years in the study of rhetoric and philosophy.

He had landed at Cádiz and must immediately have felt himself almost back at home. He will most likely have gone on to Gibraltar and from there have approached Granada by Ronda with its wonderful Tajo or cleft in the hill astride of which the town sits and which will have reminded him of the strange hill scenery of his native land. Again, the gorge of Hoyo, that magnificent pass through which the train winds mounting to ruggedly fierce peaks, to savage rocks with water rushing far below, all this could recall the fiercer aspects of "home." Here, too, of course, the Andalusian talk was practically that of Mexico, and then the rich plain-country with the shining glory of distant sierras as they neared Granada, all was more comfortingly familiar than anything he had seen for a year.

So much he may have allowed himself to register, but he had come to Granada to study, to progress towards the goal always present to his mind—that of his ordination—and he will have given his thoughts to *that*, not to the mere pleasantness of being in a Spanish land.

Yet to one as sensitive—to the poet that he was—the arrival in the lovely city of the Moors, of Ferdinand and Isabella, cannot fail to have had its earthly as well as its supernatural compensation. It was July, the hottest month of the year. But Granada is built at the foot of the spurs of the Sierra Nevada, that range of snowy splendor, the pride and glory of the town, the spring-head of cool breezes, eternal green and running waters. Granada like Mexico City is dowered with a freshness as of the north, an almost tropical sun and skies of southern blue. From the snow peaks cold waters run dancing and gurgling through the courts and gardens of the Alhambra and the Generaliffe on the hill, sparkled in innumerable fountains and descending refreshed the old capital of the Moors. In their massed palaces was, too, a network of interlacing green, the cool shadow of cypresses. And it must be supposed that in that terrific heat of July Miguel would have been sent up the Alhambra hill if only for the same educative reasons that sent young men of a former age on the grand tour of Europe to this surviving wonder of architecture, of historical association, of so many arts.

In the countless courts and halls of the Alhambra under ceilings of cedar wood (the cedar, myrtles and cypresses of Granada are more beautiful than almost anywhere else in Spain) amongst alabaster fountains and a very Arabian Night's dream of profusion and beauty he must no doubt have wandered. He will have looked out from the highest Tower of Comares over the whole assemblage of palaces to far beyond and down into a deep and narrow glen gradually widening into the green valley of the Darro on which Granada is built.

Strangely home-like, too, that glen with its thickets of pomegranates, figs and myrtles.

The Jesuit novitiate, in fine prosaic contrast to the palaces of the Moors, stands four-square, almost grim, on the rising ground of a great valley outside the town, a gigantic but well-proportioned building round two great patios, one—that of the philosophers—filled with trees shading wide pleasant paths converging on the usual white statue, center of the place. Round the two patios and on the outer walls are row upon row of unornamented windows of rooms housing no less than the two hundred and fifty inmates of the community. It is a vast almost self-supporting colony of students and professors; wine—the common drink of Spain—for the entire house is made on the place, trodden out by little boys.

Here, Miguel settled down to normal existence, to his rhetoric and philosophy.

Yet existence could not be entirely normal. Spain, after all, was not Mexico. And his heart was in Mexico: he could, and did, conceal the fact, scarcely acknowledged it to himself. But exile had for him a peculiar abstract quality of pain. He loved community life, dearly loved his brothers therein, yet there was a grief, a longing that lay in wait for him and that, if he gave it the chance, would spring out on him. News too was scarce and, when it came, was far from good. The horizon did but grow darker and darker in his far-off Mexico.

But Miguel was not the only "exile from home" in the great novitiate house—there were seventeen others with whom he had crossed the seas. Here as elsewhere one of his chief preoccupations was to prevent their moping: to them and to the house at large he was, once more, what he would himself have described, in a Spanish equivalent, as both a cheerful idiot and a little ray of sunshine.

He was ingenious, Father Dragon tells us, in thinking of things that could cheer. Often on holidays he organized jaunts—got together "the others," provisions, and a complete programme. On the occasions of one outing when all was in readiness he said: "Now we have got everything except permission to go for the picnic." . . . It ended of course by his undertaking to ask for it and he presented himself in the room of the Superior—possibly an alarmingly dignified and Spanish Superior.

"Father Superior, would you do the Mexicans the pleasure of going for a picnic with them?"

"But . . . I am too busy," said the Superior with some slight surprise.

"Ah! they will be terribly sorry . . ."

"No doubt. But, tell me, have you got leave to go for this picnic?"

"No, Father Superior, but we thought if you would come with us we need not ask leave. . . ."

"But I tell you I cannot come."

"Well"—Miguel was undeterred—"if it would take too much of your time perhaps we could go by ourselves?" Which they, of course, ended by being told to do.

This charity towards his brethren, as before, was not easy; his state of health made it heroic. He still suffered from his mysterious internal pain; while others were convulsed at some sally of his he would have to withdraw convulsed in a very different way and have actually to go to bed. One can only suppose that coming as a stranger to the big house at Granada he managed somehow to conceal most of this from his new Superiors. But they knew, at any rate, vaguely, that he was "not strong."

An epidemic of Spanish influenza broke out in the house and raged. Miguel immediately offered himself as help to the overworked infirmarians. His help was refused, he was the last who should be called upon, he with his indifferent health. But he at no time gave in easily: he ended by carrying his point, his natural eloquence and—possibly—his determination helping. The sick were isolated in a wing of the house where Miguel joined them and set to work to nurse the worst cases and—naturally—to enliven the lighter ones. Manfully he grappled with the dread depression that follows influenza and we are told that the most dejected cases yielded to his treatment.

Of course he himself ended by catching the horrid disease when his apparent gaiety was as great as ever. . . . Hardly was he up again before he was beckoning to the hale and hearty passing outside to come and join the victims in the infirmary wing, or playing an imaginary mandolin—always for him the emblem of utmost pleasure—behind the imprisoning window-panes.

From the infirmary could be seen on rising ground the fine observatory which the Jesuits had built and mounted. Miguel spent a good many nocturnal hours at the great telescope rising from the floor below him to the swinging dome in which his patience was, one gathers, sometimes slightly tried: taking altitudes must be a slow enough sort of occupation unless one has a special turn that way. From the infirmary, at least, he was able to look out over the magnificent prospect of the stretching Vega, the great flowering plain scarcely less a subject of pride to Granada than its snow-topped Sierras, or the Alhambra itself. It is a wilderness of orange grove and vineyard, of banked prickly pears and lemon orchard, of gardens bright with oleanders and camelias—the self-same gardens and leafy bowers which the Moors fought so long and so valiantly to defend: the haciendas and the very huts of the Vega still bear traces of the Moorish emblems and arabesques.

And over that enchanted prospect one likes to thin that Miguel Pro may have leaned with profoundest pleasure.

In the self-renunciation of so young and ardent a man, there is something peculiarly touching, something that stirs our self-indulgent hearts, that makes us—weakly—search for and register the scattered moments when it seems he must have known the purely earthly pleasure which he never sought for himself.

For that gaiety of his that seemed almost the essence of himself was, in the opinion of Superiors who really knew him, nothing of the kind. He had, in fact, a substratum of natural melancholy, a sensitive reaction to the pain of the world, to suffering of every kind. It was the last thing which habitually showed in him.

In 1920 he finished his five years of study in the ancient southern town and then came the question for his Provincial—what to do with him.

The Great War in Europe was well over and had affected Mexico not at all. Mexico's neighbor, the United States, had entered the War before its close. Otherwise neither the stress of those four years, nor the fate of the combatants, so much as interested the scarcely educated governors of Mexico. "Great Britain," one of them was to say a little later, "may loom large in Europe, she cuts very little ice over here."

This contempt for Europe and its opinions was sufficiently indicated, indeed, by the outrageous insult to civilization offered by the whole era of persecution in Mexico. It was quite plain to its organizers that no great government in the Old World could interfere, or even remonstrate officially, whatever they may have done privately. Rome was to be the only power—and one not then recognized as sovereign—to speak out. Pius XI in effect denounced barbarity in Mexico "without equal, cruelties and atrocities scarcely credible in the twentieth century, in the full light of civilization, scarcely credible in the face of all nations, scarcely credible without all nations rising up with a cry of horror and execration."

True that in 1919 Carranza had suddenly changed his tactics and that Catholics—the bulk of the population—could breathe again. But times were still extremely unsettled; Obregón was in that summer of 1920 "preparing" the autumn elections. This simply meant that he would seize the presidency. Miguel Pro left "Granada-in-Spain" for Granada in Nicaragua 4,000 miles away,—that is, in the tropics and within measurable distance of the Equator. He was to do there the two years' teaching which is usually part of the long probation leading, in the Society of Jesus, to the priesthood.

On the edge of the hundred-mile-long lake of Nicaragua the Society of Jesus had had for some time a day-school. To it they now decided to add a boarding-school besides the college and seminary they had opened in 1913 on their expulsion from Mexico.

The Granada school is a modern-looking building of white concrete and countless white pillars, immensely long and low, low presumably for fear of always-possible earthquakes. Miguel Pro arrived at the fine but somewhat bare-looking college just in time to prepare for the return of a horde of youngsters who up till then had been day-boys.

Nor did they, at first, much like it when they found what boarding-in was like—school all the time instead of part of it. School-boys in the tropics, and with tropical temperaments to match, must take some handling. Miguel Pro was for two years prefect of the upper school. And there, possibly for the first time, he was to know what failure meant.

It may have been only a partial failure. Father Dragon speaks, indeed, as if it had not even been that. But one who knew Miguel and who succeeded him at the Colegio Centro America, thought that Miguel had *not* been successful with the bigger boys. The smaller ones, on the other hand, loved him, while all had been struck by his personality. Whether or no he was successful, there are pupils of his, now on the road to literary distinction, who attribute their entire success to Miguel Pro.

It was a terrible climate, a terrible place in spite of the rather morbid beauty of the lake and of mountains that trembled in the haze of heat above the lake edge on the horizon. There was tropical luxuriance and lushness—palms and the wild "chocolate trees," and the coral, forty feet high that, in spring-time, dazzles the eye with its massed brightness of crimson. The heat was appalling; months on end with the thermometer at about 99 in the shade—a clammy dampness of heat. Malaria was rampant and so were mosquitoes. Sharks, alligators and jaguars, were plentiful. . . . At night one would hear the long mournful cry of pumas.

Miguel had just left the snow-cooled freshness, the not un-bracing breezes of the other Granada.

He had to superintend top-forms, teach drawing to lower ones, for it will be remembered he was a first-rate draftsman. In addition he seems to have been something like games-master, for we hear of him every day at one o'clock endeavoring to rouse the boys—the smaller ones, it is to be presumed—to some show of energy at play. *He*—we are told—with his delicacy of constitution, in the midday tropical sun and the temperature sickeningly at 37 centigrade, played to encourage them; he "leapt." . . . He organized sports, tombolas or lotteries, and the resultant funds were used for other sports.

Three times had this Granada, a typical Spanish-American colonial town, been sacked by buccaneers from the Atlantic or Pacific coasts between which it lies. Another time it was captured and burnt by filibusters;* but at the Colegio, apart from the occasional wildness of the pupils, life had a quality that seemed like tameness and was the result of the somewhat depressing climatic conditions.

It would have taken more to daunt Miguel. He catechized the servants, "a task most congenial to him," and had besides the care of a little Sunday School in an outlying chapel. If one of his confrères was bowled over by the heat or the eternal mosquitoes (Granada was within hail of the Mosquito Coast) Miguel instantly offered to replace him, to do his job.

All this lasted two years and then he was sent back to Spain again. He left Central America without visiting Mexico nor any of those who belonged to him there.

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* That is, by Walker, the American filibuster of the mid-nineteenth century (1856), finally defeated and shortly after executed by a coalition of Central America.

CHAPTER VII

ON THIS second journey to Spain, Miguel's destination was Barcelona and he was going there to do his theology.

Barcelona is since 1833 the chief town of the province of the same name, but roughly speaking it is in Catalonia, for its inhabitants are Catalan, and so is its language.

In Catalonia, Miguel Pro was not himself; not, at any rate, the jester of old.

Catalans are nothing if not proud. So are all Spaniards, but the Catalans suffer, besides, not from an ordinary inferiority complex, but from a political one. They are Catalans and nothing *else* they say, but the rest of the world, especially the rest of Spain, *will* consider them Spaniards.

Miguel seems to have retired into himself, partly from expediency perhaps and chiefly out of charity. Those practical jokes of his, his eternal ragging might, more than likely, surprise and offend his new Superiors. They might annoy his companions.

It is touching, this withdrawal into the background of so famous a "comic," this suppression of what had been his "note." A Mexican companion who joined him in his new home, though for a different course and in another part of the house, was amazed at the change in Miguel Pro. No reports of jokings reached the newer arrival. Wasn't Miguel even funny? Did he not make people laugh any more?

"He seemed to me," says the Mexican Jesuit, "to have lost some of his old spirits. On inquiry I was told he was simply keeping in the shade, as he did not know how a Catalan temperament would take his fun."

Otherwise Barcelona was a charming place in which to be. The Collegium Maximum of St. Ignatius was at Sarriá one of the suburbs of Barcelona. Like those of other big cities, especially industrial ones, Barcelona's outposts are squalid and dreary. But Sarriá is an exception: it is charming. And Barcelona itself is beautiful with magnificent boulevards and ramblas, her great cathedral and churches, her Roman remains. Yet her incomparable glory is the splendor of mountain scenery in which she is set.

From the college itself the whitened city, and the entire bay could be seen; on the clearest days even the mountains of Mallorca faintly pearl and gray above the distant violet-blue of the sea.

The college, like that of Granada, was in Miguel's time a huge place and more magnificent than the houses Jesuits build for themselves. It had been a boys' secular school and has since then returned to the same use. Rising behind this house is the district of Tibi Dabo, not long since a solitary hillside yellow with broom, with but one little old inn on the mountain-track to San Cugat with its lovely cloisters and old monastery. Now many of the richest Barcelona traders have built modern residences on Tibi Dabo and the funicular further profanes what was once wild and beautiful. Even so, when the summit is reached the hill still earns its name from the breath-taking wonder of the vista unrolled. Tradition would like to have it that this was the hill from whence Satan showed the kingdoms of the earth outspread to the Carpenter's Son Who had made them—"Tibi dabo," "To Thee I give."

At the foot of this hill, then, Miguel did his two years of theology.

If he continued to be less of a jester he was, at any rate, recognized as an artist, even as an actor. For instance, at a public entertainment—or Academy in Jesuit phraseology—held in honor of Cardinal Benloch, Miguel was told off to "do something" and recited. Not an ordinary recitation; for he was incapable of not giving to things a twist, or turn, something a little *cocasse* or unusual. He recited, therefore, a parody, or imitation of modern decadent verse, half funny, half serious.

But though the verses affected to, and did, make fun of what they imitated, they were—strangely—all but beautiful. "In spite," writes one who heard and has remembered, "of the absurdities, they were full of true lyrical intensity. I felt somehow that he was not altogether out of sympathy with the style he was ridiculing."

That seems to characterize the young man of thirty-one that he then was. Conventionality, and no doubt the common-sense side of him, and even the point of view expected of him by his elders, would lead him to exercise his wit upon the extravagance of latter-day decadent verse. Yet with what may be fine in them in rhythm or stark queerness the artist in him would be unable, perhaps, secretly not to sympathize. And this secret sympathy he could not, or perhaps in the last resort would not, suppress, he being sincere and courageous to a fault.

"That he had a terrific intensity of passion, I only realized when I heard him recite the poem," continues the writer already quoted recalling the impressions of those years ago concerning one whom he knew by no means intimately.

One can see the scene: the rather austere Jesuit-house hall with perhaps a raised platform. If it was like the one in the Salón de Actos at the Granada College, it had a truly imposing backdrop of some religious apotheosis and stiffly correct rows of stiff chairs, in the foremost of which was "the public," friends or benefactors of the Order, grandees of Spain perhaps. Then the elderly, dignified, even severe-seeming Superiors, the sort of people in whom the man-in-the-street would see the lineal descendants or representatives of the Grand Inquisitors—and shudder.

And on the platform, bravely outlined against the backdrop, the slim figure of the young Jesuit—dark, vivid, electrifying. And he was still really a probationer, on trial as it were. It required, one would think, a good deal of pluck and a terrific *entrain* to get away, as he himself would have put it, with his half-admiration for the decadent verse. It says, too, a good deal for the insight and broad-mindedness of his Superiors and elders—*their* power of sympathetic understanding of their young "subject."

There can be no doubt that Miguel Pro had a way with him; that he could, metaphorically, steal any number of horses while others with less *diablerie*, less in them of the school- or even the street-boy, would not dream of looking over the stable-door. And there must have been a good deal of his essential self that "pierced," that simply pushed its way through and was subconsciously felt by those who had to watch and judge him.

About thirty miles or so from Barcelona is Montserrat the cradle of the Society of Jesus. Not far off is Manresa.

In the Holy Week of 1924, to his profound joy, Miguel was sent to make his retreat at Manresa, now a rather typical provincial Catalan town, almost entirely unspoilt by any invasion of tourists, and picturesque in situation and coloring.

The Jesuit house rises from the *terrains-vagues* on the edge of the little town against the hill. Where the tall, many-windowed building is terraced to meet the steep incline, the Santa Cueva or Holy Cave, is beautifully enshrined. Cased in marbles it has been transformed into a chapel over whose altar is a reproduction of the Saint as he once knelt in this very cavern whose bare rock still forms its roof.

Here Miguel heard Mass and prayed at intervals during his week's retreat; the three companions who made it with him speak of his intense fervor in the holy place.

"Never shall I forget that retreat," says one of the three. "He knew how to hide, by the joy he shed around him, his spirit of mortification. But in this retreat our rooms were near his and every evening we heard him take the discipline ('flagelarse') with an extraordinary vigor."

From the house he could look over the outposts of Manresa—the little railway line, a raised concrete road and bridge—over rising, shrubby ground to where, jagged against the sky, the indented outline of hills rose and ended as abruptly. This was Montserrat.

To its huge monastery, perched aerie-wise among the ravines and all but inaccessible peaks that had sheltered St. Ignatius, Miguel naturally made pilgrimage. Was he aware, one wonders, that he, the young unknown foreign pilgrim, was one after the heart of his father and Founder? Ignatius was a fighter, a warrior—Miguel was to prove himself such. Ignatius was one of the greatest of Apostles—Miguel, one may say without exaggeration, agonized unless in the thick of apostolic work. The human sympathies of St. Ignatius seem to have gone out to the brilliantly endowed: St. Francis Xavier; Peter Favre "as brilliant as, or more so, than Xavier"; the boy Salmerón of Toledo; that other "insupportable fascinating boy," Pedro de Ribadeneira whom the elder Fathers "could not stand" but whom Ignatius not only "stood" but made at last the Rector of the Roman College. And Miguel in all he undertook was brilliant. Ignatius to cheer a neurasthenic—Ortiz—had danced: Miguel was famous for his castanets. . . . The early companions of St. Ignatius when evangelizing Venetia were taken for foreign mountebanks or jongleurs. St. Ignatius would have commended his modern young disciple for his high heart and spirits. He was the antithesis of what St. Ignatius could not—and did not—"stand": softness or slackness. For, we are told, "though he [St. Ignatius] did not, naturally, want his men to mutiny, he preferred, undoubtedly, the temperament which had in it the passion requisite for revolt, to the anæmic soul which just collapses into doing what it is told."* Miguel had undoubtedly such a temperament. And the strength necessary to subdue it.

Miguel's second time in Spain came to an end.

In the September of the same year—1924—he left the blue skies and sea of the Mediterranean for the house of exiled French Jesuits at Enghien in Belgium.

Enghien is a smallish country town at about an hour's train distance from Brussels in the pleasant Hainault country of long, poplar-bordered roads. Not far off are gentle hills.

Another new land, another new home for Miguel. He was "presented" by a Mexican Father who had preceded him by a year at St. Augustine's, the Jesuit house. This Father was to succeed Miguel later in his apostolate in Mexico City.

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* Rev. C. C. Martindale, S.J., Commanders in Chief: St. Ignatius Loyola.

The beginnings at Enghien were rather trying to all concerned. Miguel scarcely knew French—though the fact of not knowing a language never worried him much and certainly never for very long. Latin had, therefore, to be used even for the most trivial intercourse, and St. Augustine's was a French house. The French pronounced Latin one way and Miguel another, so confusion abounded.

He was undeterred. He had read a good deal of French and set to work to talk it. Very shortly he understood a surprising amount of the swift French of Frenchmen, was able to join in and even to be funny. . . . "Tu contra; ego sum Pro," he had said in joining a group where a lively argument was going on. As they did not know his name was Pro, they were at first somewhat surprised at this sudden intervention by a newcomer. All was explained and the quick-witted French were subsequently enchanted to find that they had a quicker-witted addition to their community.

His coming, indeed, was considered providential. There were, in the house, nearly a hundred young theologians of *thirteen* different nationalities, all impatient to understand each other. Miguel with his inimitable power of gesture, of facial expression and general audacity, was invaluable. He cared nothing for grammar or syntax, nothing for the possibility of being laughed at, nothing for anything. He just talked; "butted in" as he would have said; kept things going. To join a conversation in a scarcely known language and somehow to be exceedingly gay in it was simply nothing to a person of his abnormally developed social gifts.

Here, as in every residence in which he had ever been, they soon knew he could be appealed to and counted on for service of any and every sort, and for enlivening anything in the nature of a festivity: he had, of course, brought with him the guitar, the mandolin and the castanets. Once more his student's repertory was called upon, and his quite inexhaustible powers of improvisation. Then, says one who knew him at Enghien, his blood fired by the terrific applause that greeted him, he would give imitations of his new companions, imitations so inimitably perfect that the victims of his always inoffensive art were themselves forced to laugh. When all was said, too, he put the same good will, the same *talent*, into his constant service to his companions, so that they would have been churlish indeed had they resented the joyous liberty he took in "imitating" them.

Anyone who knocked at his door to ask a service, was, they say, received like one who came to *do* a service. He might be writing or studying: he jumped up with a quite unfeigned pleasure at being disturbed. . . . "I shall be delighted," he would say, "simply delighted."

"St. John Berchmans," says one of Miguel's French biographers rather quaintly, "was content to say calmly in such a case 'willingly,' but St. John Berchmans had not been born under the hot sun of Mexico."

Miguel, it will be seen, had cast off the self-imposed restraint of Barcelona: he was once more the jester. And once more, and even far more than before, at a price. For his ill health now reached a climax. Frequently even at Sarriá, he had been obliged to go without food at his evening meal, a state of things which Spanish austerity perhaps regarded as inevitable.

For the first year at Enghien he appears to have kept his increasing suffering from the knowledge or, certainly, the intervention of his Superiors. To shake off any depression of ill health, we are told, he would play hand-ball with his American confrères. . . . On holidays the matches prolonged themselves for hours—Calles, as Miguel laughingly put it, against Coolidge the then American President!

He was, at Enghien, intimately happy in spite of suffering. Always much-liked, he himself found an exhilaration in coming into contact with so many nationalities and diversities of temperament.

There was always in him, it would seem, a certain unity which makes even for human happiness: a great simplicity, a direct looking towards God, towards his own single and unchanging end—sacrifice of self and apostleship of souls. No complications of doubt or mental stress.

Underlying this, but never deflecting it, was that "terrific intensity of passion" which, as it grew with his growth, was to make of him—in as far as it is permitted so to say—a saint, a tremendous champion of God.

Of the ordinary temptations of young vigorous manhood he made light: almost he implied that he rather liked them! "There is nothing finer than these terrible fights known only to God and the soul: nothing so purifies a soul," he was to say later. "For me, I do not fear them: the Blessed Virgin is so good a mother to me." Bold words, and characteristic. But he had an intense devotion to Our Lady.

But he was still young and, in a sense, unfinished. If he had, as far as can be judged, no internal stress with which to contend, one seems to see none the less in him that strain of morbidity not uncommon in the "professed" jester and which may or may not have been a source of temptation to him. But he kept no diary, as far as is known; made no notes or commentaries on his spiritual or mental states. So that one might easily conclude that he was merely simple, purely objective, an utterly "straight" character.

But he was not. On the one hand his simplicity, his natural gaiety and unrivalled powers of diffusing it and the pose, as it were, of having nothing else; and on the other hand his power of suffering, for himself and others, that could reach morbidity. There was the affectation, if one may so put it, even to himself in all likelihood, of being just a good young Religious eager to advance in virtue and to work for the glory of God. And there was what time was to bring to the surface—his ardor, the intensity of his love of God and of souls for God—his heroism.

Even as long before as at Nicaragua, his clear-eyed confrère has written of him that "Anyone could see that he was not an ordinary man." Yet it was just what most of his entourage thought he was.

He was, in fact, the most "modern" of saints and not only in point of date.

He *was* happy at Enghien. Yet in his conversation when it became easy for him to talk (and possibly before!) the persecution at home in Mexico, the Jesuit houses "over there," their more ardent climate, their skies less gray than those of Hainault, the beauty and riches of the New World—his world—all this, we are told, coming up by chance, let his comrades guess that, gaily as he bore his continued exile, his inmost longing was yet to be back in his own country. The affection shown him at Enghien, and that he valued as it deserved, could help but not cure the longing for home and his own people, especially his mother. His heart then and always was particularly sensitive. But he was swift to shake off any sadness of thought: "Il se dégageait promptement," says Father Couvreur.

As time went on, the exact bent of his future apostolate grew more defined in his mind. He had, even as a little boy, loved miners and peons: he had a natural affinity for the genuine thing, simple bed-rock humanity. His wish to give his life "to the miners" had never altered: he merely enlarged it to include all classes of working people. This might, as Father Jacques Couvreur, S.J., says again (in his brilliant monograph, *Le P. Pro-Juarez. Au Mexique, Terre des Martyrs*) have been a dream without influence on his studies, or a *mouvement d'exaltation* without serious foundation. It was neither. Very firmly he set himself to order his studies with a view to the precise apostolate he planned. He undertook a very definite and scientific "christianisation of his sociological plan of action." This he founded on the teaching of the encyclicals of Leo XIII, comparing them with the doctrines of the Church on social subjects, and had planned a like research into the teaching of Pius X.

It was, naturally, his belief that a priest who intends to carry out any extensive work must be doctrinally equipped for it to the utmost of his powers. He had, therefore, in his very intensive theological studies, rather abstained from the allurements of pure speculation. He had a quick and subtle mind but he kept it, when it was for him to choose, rather to practical points of doctrine, things he would have to teach in pulpit or retreats, than on more abstract levels. He had a natural faith, a natural certainty of the nearness of the Unseen, of God. This he wanted above all to learn to give to others. His studies were directed to that object before any other.

In the beginning of January, 1925, the well-known writer and preacher, Father Raoul Plus, S.J., went to

Enghien to give a series of conferences on "The Gift of Self to God and Souls." This exactly suited Miguel. He had already, on arriving at St. Augustine's, set to work to read in French, Father Plus' *Dieu en Nous.* He caught, as it were, at this development of the doctrine of grace; it profoundly satisfied him. It led him, he felt, easily and gently to that tremendous treatise on the Trinity which was to be broached in the new term.

Later he often in talk reverted, not with abstract speculation, but in almost homely terms, to the life of the Three Persons in our souls, to our own raising to the life of God Himself through grace. One of his companions who knew of his increasing and terrible insomnia asked Miguel how he was able none the less to turn so serene a face to the world. "Insomnia, yes," he answered. "But then one is never alone."

Enghien is best known to the religious world at large for its famous library of the Exercises of St. Ignatius. There, in a great vaulted apartment on the ground floor, are the books, pamphlets and manuscripts in four sections, the Text, Theory, Practice, and History, of the Exercises. It was founded by the well-known Father Watrigant, S.J., with whose name the whole modern revival of retreats is inseparably connected.

Long before Miguel Pro was sent there, Father Plater —in 1911—had visited Enghien and he described in "Retreats for the People" both the library and the personality of Father Watrigant. The latter was an old man when Miguel arrived in 1924, but he had lost neither the "charm" which caused obstacles to melt in his retreats campaign like snow before the morning sun, nor his inspiring energy. He loved his library like a father.

Miguel was to learn, from his two years in the store-house of energy, a full appreciation of the effectiveness of retreats as a remedy for the religious indifference, the thoughtlessness and folly of the day. They would be, he hoped, one of the most powerful weapons in the campaign he dreamt of. He could not forget the oft-quoted: "If you want apostles, get men to make retreats" of the French manufacturer to his Belgian co-religionists. Father Watrigant was never tired of stressing the importance of retreats for working men, those particular friends of Miguel's—their needs, the special message the Church has for them. He had known so many miners! so much of the apostolate "of the workman by the workman."

CHAPTER VIII

ALL this time there was slowly approaching the great, the fundamental event towards which his whole life had set since his entry into the novitiate at El Llano.

In January, 1925, he had kept his thirty-fourth birthday: in the following August he was to be ordained; he would at long last, according to the austere Jesuit plan, be a priest.

By sublimating his studies in preparation for his apostolate he was enabled to cheat a very definite longing, that of constant and lengthy prayer in the chapel of the house.

He came from a country where church-going is a habit easy and familiar, from a people warm-hearted and loving and who, unless perverted, most warmly love God and His Mother, the saints, and—most fervently—the Blessed Sacrament: church is home to them, as really "home" as their own roof and walls and hearthstone.

Miguel's choice of life and training had developed this almost natural love of God to a highly advanced supernaturalness. He loved the sacramental presence with a profound gravity of passion. Someone was to say of him later, that had they ever known a doubt of the great mystery of the tabernacle, that doubt must have been for ever dispelled by seeing Miguel in prayer before It.

When a little later, at Enghien, ill-health finally took him from his studies, he was able to make up for lost time and to *be* before the Blessed Sacrament far oftener than ever before. He would kneel for ages, they say, quite near the altar, his dark eyes fixed upon the tabernacle, quite upright, without support of any sort, without movement, in profound withdrawal into himself, in his hand his rosary—precisely as it was to be at the supreme moment of his life. But that was not yet.

The great day—of his Ordination—came on August 31.

"It is not," writes Father Couvreur above quoted, "without emotion that one remembers it." Yet, did the officiating Bishop suppose that in the bronzed young deacon—Miguel Pro had a fairly large percentage of Indian, therefore Aztec, blood—one of twenty-two to receive the tonsure, he was to ordain a future martyr? one who, in all human probability, would be raised to the altars of the Church? That, as Father Couvreur again says, in putting the chalice into the young priest's hands he was giving him that in which, after drinking the blood of his crucified Master, he was to find too the courage of uttermost sacrifice?

Possibly some such notion may have crossed the Bishop, Monseigneur Lecomte's mind, for the persecution in Mexico throve apace. But the chances of marytrdom for ordinants from the four ends of the earth are never totally absent. There were ordained with Miguel eighteen of the exiled French Jesuits of Enghien who were to leave shortly for China and Madagascar; also a Dutchman, an American and a Brazilian. Miguel may simply have passed with the rest.

Most of the other ordinants found friends and relations waiting to embrace and congratulate them. Miguel, still a boy at heart, went to the sacristy and wept: he felt as if his heart must break—the greatest joy, the greatest sorrow together. For his people were not there; above all he minded his mother's absence. She had so longed to see this day, and suddenly in raising his hand to give his first blessing he had felt the tears rise. . . . She was more than four thousand miles away, growing old, and never perhaps "to see her dream come true"—her Miguelito on the altar. . . .

But swiftly he reacted, went out into the corridor, met another of the ordained. "We are priests at last!" he said joyfully. And added, "And that suffices."

At a later date he was to tell a friend with that perfect simplicity of his: "On the day of my ordination I simply asked Our Lord one thing—to be of use to souls."

"Of use to souls." For eight years the desire had been kept in the depths of his soul; very rarely, as he felt it, had he been able to turn it into action. Teaching, his own studies in philosophy and theology, had filled the years of his youth. And now that he had come to the time of fruition he was once more to hear the words Not Yet. He knew French colloquially, and supplied the lack by native wit, but that would not quite do for the pulpit or even the confessional, least of all for retreats. There was much to be done, but he was not the man to do it. . . .

But if Miguel, now Father Pro, had often known discouragement, it may safely be said that he had never gone down before it.

On the day after his ordination he knocked at the door of the Father who settled the saying of outside or "supply" Masses. Could he, the newly-ordained, say such a Mass of "supply" as early as possible and as often as possible, either at the parish church or at the Sisters of Charity? for at these Masses there was an enormous number of communicants. That would make up in some measure for being unable to exercise his ministry—like the French scholastics, he added with a slight natural, twinge of envy. . . .

He had too a month's holiday in store.

Obviously he could not rejoin his family in that time. Could he go and visit a far larger family—that of the workers? This too was allowed him. He was overjoyed: he exulted like a child, wanted to take companions with him. "What!" he exclaimed to an enterprising American confrère, "you have not seen the Walloon mines? You cannot go back without! In Mexico it is terribly important to know all about a miner's life."

He set out for Charleroi, in the Belgian Black Country, the mining town on the Sambre where in 1914 in the very streets of the manufacturing quarter of the place, the flower of the German Army had encountered the fierce Arab and Senegalese troops of the French in hand to hand fighting.

Charleroi has a fierce history—long before the Great War it was six times exchanged between France and Spain. It was at the heart of things from 1914 till the Armistice. After November 11, and while the enemy was marching eastwards, abandoning munition dumps and high explosives, two German soldiers, it was said, were found firing trucks of explosives. The Charleroi miners, who had had to work for the Germans, went mad with rage and, after catching the two men and shooting them, endeavored to catch up with the retreating Sixth German Army. A general mêlée ensued in which the burgomaster, while throwing himself between miners and a German car in order to save its passengers, was himself attacked by his own citizens. A fierce lot, then, the Charleroi workmen. This was entirely to the new Father Pro's liking in as far as *he* was concerned.

Besides miners, Charleroi has glass workers, workers of yarn and hardware, the vast iron works of Couillet, smelting furnaces and nail manufactures: the very place of dreams for Miguel Pro, those long dreams that had started in his childhood years ago at Concepción del Oro. Here were huge factory chimneys; great blast-furnaces reddening the night sky for miles around; rolling-mills where tremendous rollers crushed raw material to atoms, flung molten metal into sheets as thin as paper. Above all, round about the town, the mines. Here, for the first time, he could, with all the zeal of his freshly-made priest's heart, come to grips with the friends of Christ, the Workman of Nazareth. That was how he himself envisaged it.

He seems to have plunged forthwith into activity: he could never bear to wait if he could help it. . . . His boyhood repeated itself; he put on the blue linen overalls and went down into the mines. He went with the gravity, says Father Couvreur, of a pilgrim. He had to sympathize with the first awkwardness of the "young ones" in their first month "down below"; to listen with a quite inexhaustible patience to complaints of the more fiery; almost to anticipate the involved and far from choicely-worded grievances of older men, their weariness, and sometimes the sadness of their lives that so cut him to the heart. These were, one supposes, judging by what came later, Catholic miners. Catholic, that is, in practise as well as name.

Coming to the surface again he refused the shower-bath so as to mix more easily with the miners on their homeward way. Very deliberately he got into a workmen's compartment on the train. Something about him, if he had not changed out of the blue overalls, must have shown him to be a priest, for *these* miners were struck dumb at the audacity of a "curé" entering their carriage.

One of them who was eating stopped short with the intention of intimidating this strange bird: "Monsieur le Curé, do you know what you are letting yourself in for?"

"Well . . . what?"

"We are Socialists." (Almost the equivalent, in Belgium, of saying, "We are Reds.")

"Excellent," said the supposed Curé, "for I too am a Socialist."

"What, you?"

"Yes. Only"—here he scratched his head—"I have always had a difficulty: when we have got all the money of the rich into our own hands, how on earth shall we set about keeping it?"

The miner, not being able to think of a solution, got out of it by going on, "There are Communists here too."

"Communists? Better still. For I am even a Communist. For instance, it is one o'clock. You have some food and I too am hungry. Won't you share your food with me?"

The poor miner, struck dumb by such aplomb, looked at his pals and wondered what to say next. The conversation continued. "Are not you scared of travelling in our carriage?"

"Scared? Why? I am always armed." The dickens he was. . . . The men began to look foolish. This was a new sort of curé. Father Pro with the utmost coolness drew out his crucifix. "This is my ammunition," he said. "With this on me I could not be scared." And then and there he started to explain to these "Reds" the love of Christ for workers. . . .

At the next halt one of them got out and returned with some chocolate from a chocolate-machine and shared it with the "curé." When they had to get out, the whole party shook him by the hand: they parted friends.

All this was splendid as far as it went, but he felt it went a very little way. He could do so little really to make contact with the souls of all this people he positively yearned to help. He had long hoped to be allowed to do a regular course, to go either into the mines, or as a metal-worker, so as not only to understand the workman's point of view but to be one of them, to be in their skin, as it were.

Leave for this had to be obtained from his Mexican Provincial. Father Pro had prayed and thought about this so long. Now the time had come when he felt justified in writing "home" for the necessary permission, and did so.

Till he could get his answer he flung himself into study of the Walloon language used by the people. He stayed at Fayt-Manage whose château had been converted into the retreat-house familiar to readers of "Le Blé Qui Lève" of René Bazin.

The house, it may be remembered, is a fine building, white against its background of trees. In September, autumn flowers still lingered, the park would have shown its first burnished gold and bronze, its cedars shed their first scented needles. In the rose-alleys we read of, pale blossom will have dropped their perfumed leaves—in vain.

For Father Pro would have ignored or trampled on these appeals to his poetic sense, and would have concentrated on the eighty-six bedrooms for "workers" in retreat, the great bare Salle des Conferences, especially perhaps on "the white statue of the Mother and Child" on whose plinth was the inscription: "Our Lady of the Workers, pray for us." *That* would have drawn his eager interest.

From Fayt, Père Lechien had done for Belgium what Father Watrigant had done for France. Retreats had been started there in 1892; its organization for recruiting retreat-makers, grouping and keeping them together subsequently, was marvelous.

Father Pro was intensely interested in learning precisely how this after-care was organized and one may surmise his approving satisfaction on finding that it centered chiefly in the Confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, "living cells—active and militant organizations," as they had been described at the Congress of these Confraternities held at Fayt in 1911. He was enchanted to know of the incalculable good done by the workmen members.

Here at Fayt he made friends in the great "Jociste" movement, the Social Guild of Belgium. He assisted at the summer school for organizers; met directors of other social activities; had interminable talks with the young and enthusiastic helpers from the far ends of Belgium. This week was a memory he loved to look back on and of which he often spoke. The J. O. C. (Young Catholic Workers) would do splendidly in Mexico, he said.

Those who met him about this time have put on record their very exact recollection of his appearance. It was impossible, they say, to take him for a Frenchman or a Belgian: he was, to begin with, so "bronzed." He was of medium height, slim and well-made with hands and feet rather small than large. His face and expression were extremely characteristic although on enquiry I have been told both that he was, and that he was *not*, "good-looking": on the whole I incline to think, comparing various opinions and photographs, that he *was*.

His forehead was unusually high, surmounting eyes which were large and deeply black. There was a flame, it is commonly said—something extraordinary—in his glance: "profound and impenetrable," says Father Couvreur, "when in conversation he attempted to mystify someone; firm and quiet in hours of pain when he kept it on the crucifix; searching and patient 'in difficult study'; kind and peace-giving [*pacifiant*] for souls met in the hazards of the road."

The troubles of other people, even the distress of the misunderstood, never escaped his quick perceptions. But for anyone to take up a hostile attitude to him was enough to rouse him to audacity: he was incapable of fear, and at Enghien, when he barely knew French, he would put questions with quick assurance, enforce his point, utterly disconcert by his sureness, his wit and his general optimism.

Father Couvreur, when he reaches this section of his monograph, entitles it "The Royal Road"—of suffering, of course, is understood.

Father Pro's letter to his Provincial had gone speeding across the Atlantic, but its reply was not destined to bear fruit.

Hardly had his September month of holiday ended than the crisis of Father Pro's ill-health supervened. Something had, at last, to be done about it, something so definite as an operation. His theological studies must be set aside, he must for the time being give up community life. From such a trial with its attendant separation from his brethren the most high-hearted apostle might shrink a little.

"I am ready to die at once," to a group of friends, he said, however, with characteristic thoroughness, reaching out to, jumping at, the very worst and promptly giving it his adherence.

Again to the Spiritual Father who spoke to him of the operation, recommending him to undergo it: "I am not afraid of physical pain—she is such an old friend!" As indeed "she" must have been by this time.

But the last thing anyone wanted him to do was to die though he was so ready to envisage death. He had, instead, to take train for Brussels where, at the Clinique St. Remi at Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, just outside the boulevards that encircle the Belgian capital, he was put under observation. The result of the consultation of specialists was what had been expected: an internal operation was to be tried.

To a certain extent this operation was successful, but the time that followed was painful in the extreme. Nevertheless his nun-nurse had the greatest difficulty in preventing him exhausting himself for her amusement. . . . As it was, she was constantly in fits of laughter.

Yet his prospects were far from smiling, and there began for him four months of intense trial which none could have supposed, from his demeanor, that he felt to be a trial at all. He had reached the goal of Ordination for this: to lie useless in a nursing home, shut away from the remotest possibility of the apostolate of which he dreamed, away from his brothers and his "home" in his land of exile.

A second operation was thought necessary and this time, for what reason I cannot say, it was to be performed without anæsthetics. . . . It seems scarcely credible, but it is a fact nevertheless, that he asked for the Code of Canon Law and the entire time in which he was under the surgeon's hands he kept his eyes upon the text, forcing himself to attend only to the problems in interpretation of the passages he slowly read. . . .

The time which followed was agonizing. Food caused him intolerable pain. At times, in face of his nursing-sister's inflexibility in carrying out doctor's orders, he would exclaim half beseechingly, half indignantly: "Ah, Sister! if you were in my place!" Or at others he would sigh and be overheard giving vent to his favorite exclamation, "God of America and of Belgium the free"! But orders were formal, his duty was to obey: he obeyed.

The intense weariness of the time in the clinic was occasionally broken by a visit to Enghien: then all was joy for him and St. Augustine's. His account of his life at the clinic was a "scream"; he noticed everything, forgot nothing, and his unquenchable sense of fun served it all up for the delectation of his companions on these joy-days "at home." Not that he was not grateful even to his inflexible nurse, but he could be as funny—as full of *esprit*—the word is used over and over again about him and in accounts of him—about his medicines or bandages, his illness—in a word, as others can be tedious and dull.

He was really not in the least nearer being cured and in January a third operation was mooted. He simply bowed his head and accepted it.

The grace to bear what must have been all but unbearable in his long seclusion he obtained in prayer. His nights were practically given to prayer which never failed to restore, as it were to renew him. He was able to be at his old work of cheering other priests in the nursing home.

But these three operations and the almost harsh "treatment" lasting four months had not done what was hoped. An increasing weakness resulted from his inability to eat.

From Mexico the news was very bad: Calles was in power.

Plutarco Elías Calles had succeeded Obregón after the latter had caused the assassination, it was said, of his friend and benefactor Carranza. The real persecution, *la persécution brutale*, had begun two months after Calles reached the presidency, early in 1925. The news was not calculated to help the convalescence of an invalid Mexican priest.

It was decided to try what sending Father Pro to the south of France could do for him.

But before there was time for him to leave Brussels, a blow fell which, humanly speaking, he had long dreaded. His mother wrote constantly to him; but she was growing old. Not long before his final operation—of which, of course, she was ignorant—she wrote to him: "I grow older day by day: I fear you will scarcely find me here on your return to Mexico . . . I think God asks the sacrifice from me of never seeing you at the altar." She died a few days after writing this, on February 8, 1926.

His grief was very great, the circumstances peculiarly harrowing. Father Pro accepted the cross, offering it for the souls which he had prayed at his Ordination to be allowed to help.

A few days later he was able to go to Enghien and join the others at recreation. Suddenly he stopped and said in a tone of great conviction: "My mother is in heaven. This morning I wanted to say Mass for the repose of her soul but something prevented my praying for her. I am certain she is in heaven."

Before he left Brussels he wrote in French a sheaf of verses which have been preserved; some of them have been thus translated:

SOULS

(On the eve of my third operation and before hearing of my mother's death.)

Take all from me, Lord! Only give me souls.
In health and fortune, honor, let me have no part.
Only give wings to the devouring flame
That zeal and love of Thee have lighted in my
heart.

Send me neglect, and exile, loneliness;
With tears undried, unfriended, lacking even
then
My mother's kisses. Give to me instead
Only, my God, the souls, the souls of sinning men.

Then when a prey to sorrow, friendship fled
And never any voice to answer to my voice,
When on my saddened pathway I find none
Willing my cross to share, the burden of my choice,

Still I will not complain albeit Your Hand,
Father, with ill more cruel tries me. Till the grave
I do consent no happiness to know,
But give me, oh, my God! but give me souls to
save.

. . . .

Love of my God, buried upon Thy breast,
Oh, only source of good, by Thee alone I live;
I am Thy victim, Lord, now may'st Thou strike,
All I have given to Thee—naught have I else to
give.

The full text of the French verses will be found in the Appendix. They are not perhaps poetry in its most exalted sense and they seem to have in them the strain of morbidity of which I have spoken, but they are written in a language foreign to their author. (Possibly, after all, this morbid strain was pathological, a by-product of his ill-health and not an essential part of himself—it is hard to say.)

But there is at any rate in all these lines a rhythm, a lilt. And apart from the improbability of Miguel ever finding himself abandoned ("Que la main d'un ami ne séche pas mes pleurs," with "never any voice to answer to my voice") the feeling is so obviously sincere, so much the real bedrock of his thought and wishes—his real intention and desire of enduring *anything*, giving up *everything*, so long as he had the love of God and could fight for souls—that the lines have a definite value as written by one who wrote so little that was introspective. Of the beauty of that feeling, the "lesson" to those of us so infinitely colder and feebler than Miguel Pro, it is unnecessary to speak.

The confrère who was with him at Granada and Barcelona and who succeeded him in his "teaching" post at Nicaragua, writes: "During his stay in Belgium he suffered a great deal. It was then, I think, that grace worked on him most. The absolute ruin of his family (they were earnest, honorable middle-class folk) three painful surgical operations and the awful state of his country which he loved passionately, were the chief means God used to sanctify him."

The death of his mother may, surely, be added to this list.

Of the grace of the priesthood there can be no doubt that, although he could not fully exercise its ministry, he made the fullest use. It was constantly before him.

To a companion of his happy days at El Llano who was to be ordained in the summer of 1926 he wrote:

"My dear little Father C.:

"If instead of scribbling a letter I could talk to you for half an hour, I could tell you the great consolation [*consolacion tan grande*] I felt on hearing the official announcement of your being about to ascend the altar. I have a habit of ragging, but to-day I want to talk to you in all sincerity. It is nearly a year since I had the happiness of Ordination; the joy that one then feels has nothing of this world. . . .

"Get rid forever of your old Benjamin. [The name of this friend.] For even if you do not want to, you will undergo an absolute transformation. The Holy Ghost will give Himself to you in a special way on the day of your Ordination. . . . You will be amazed yourself to see the change—*in melius*—in that poor nature which plays us such villainous tricks; and that not only in the great outlines of your new life, but in the small details of your daily existence. Is this the same will I had? My way of thinking, judging, deciding, is it the same? The ideals of sanctity cherished during long years of religious life, are they really the same? My dear little Benjamin, if you believe the experience of a poor *minor*, be sure that you will not be to-morrow what you are to-day.

"There is something in me that I had never felt before and which makes me conceive of things quite otherwise than I did; it is not the fruit of study, of our (more or less) solid sanctity, nor of anything with a personal or human seal on it. It comes from the sacerdotal quality which the Holy Ghost imprints on our soul.

"It is a closer participation in the divine life which raises and makes us partakers of the Divinity; it is a higher force which makes accessible desires and aspirations which till now we could not realize.

"Yet this change I had not felt before coming into contact with souls. I put aside false humility so as to open to you the poor heart of a brother. In one way or another I was during my theology occupied in the ministry for about six months. I am able to assure you that God Our Lord deigned to use me as an instrument for doing good. How many souls I have left comforted, how many sorrows I have dissipated, what courage I have inspired in souls in pressing them to follow the harder ways of life. Two almost lost vocations came back to God; a seminarist who had decided to give up the soutane is following with renewed courage the designs of Providence.

"Obviously it is not I who did all that: I have only to consider my 'ways,' my temperament, my dispositions and my studies. Sometimes I wanted to say 'black' and I said 'white' when, in effect, it was 'white' I ought to have said.

"If I have done any good it is clear that I owe it to the grace of the priesthood, to the Holy Ghost Who guided me, to something not human. I had not felt these things before my ordination.

"Observe, I speak with ease in the pulpit [that of the community chapel?] and I give lessons to those who ought to give them to me, but the tongue speaketh out of the abundance of the heart and I am overwhelmed by the graces the Lord has given me since the happy day of my ordination. . . .

"You are going to have the same grace as that I enjoy: the consolation I felt in learning this makes me scribble this poor letter with no order or plan in it, but written with the best of good will you can imagine.

"Adiós! May the Lord bless you. I have never forgotten you a single day at Mass, but believe that I shall especially think of you in future so as to thank God and that you may prepare to the best of your power.

"Your brother in the Heart of Jesus,
"Your
"MIGUELITO.
"27th May, 1926."

This letter was written towards the end of his stay in the South of France where he had gone early in the year; the "ministry" of six months to which he alluded must have been quite informal and have included that at Charleroi and on the Riviera. The letter is, again, characteristic of him in its directness and unflinchingness: he never seems to have had even a shadow of human respect and would start without preamble, if he felt it expedient, to talk of God, or Our Lord, to travelers, workmen, or anyone whom he felt he could reach by so doing. They seem to have *liked* this courage and simplicity combined, to have welcomed such directness of approach: there is no record of rebuffs received when he had had, as it were, a clear start. At other times he showed a more usual tact or diplomacy, a long patience that nothing could tire. He was capable of spending—as he did—a whole afternoon looking at and listening to the history of a whole shopful of antiques so as to get in, at the end, a few words of enquiry as to the dealer's religion. The dealer was an elderly man whom the chaplain at Hyères had recommended for prayers, saying that he might die at any moment and was in no state to appear before God, and yet that it was impossible to do anything for him. The young Jesuit immediately offered himself for the forlorn hope—an "I can but try" suggestion. Before he left the shop he and the old man were talking on the best of terms on the subject of *le Bon Dieu.*

CHAPTER IX

FATHER PRO had arrived in the early spring at Hyères, that outpost of the French Riviera and its most ancient "winter resort" whose equable climate makes it also a summer one.

Built, as most people know, a little inland on a gently sloping hill, it overlooks the Rade d'Hyères with its semicircle of islands—the fortress-crowned Port Cros; Porqueroles; le Levant. Often Father Pro must have seen them emerging at sunrise all pearl and gold from the pearl and blue of the sea, shimmering in that incomparable light of morning of the Mediterranean.

For, on arrival at the Maison de Famille, or clinic for priests, kept by the Franciscan Sisters of Sainte Marie des Anges, he had immediately offered to say the very earliest daily Mass there: the others could sleep longer.

The Superior not unnaturally hesitated.

"Please let me," he insisted. "I do not sleep anyhow, so it will not even be a sacrifice."

Permission was given, the Superior hoping, of course, that soon he *would* sleep.

A whole colony of other priests doing cures, or receiving treatment of some sort, was in the house and will have helped him, one hopes, to get through many painful hours. His entire internal organism seems to have been suffering from inertia, to have required stimulating: the doctor felt obliged to continue the system of toning up and strengthening by means of food—which Father Pro loathed—and other "tonics." He submitted patiently to a very severe régime.

This by no means reduced him to invalidism. As soon as he had breakfasted, after his "earliest" Mass, he returned to serve the next. The Sister-Sacristan gently remonstrated with him without any effect beyond: "I should *like* to serve every Mass that is celebrated."

Needless to say he visited those in the house who had to keep to their rooms. I have no sort of doubt that he began by making them laugh and by generally "*les égayer*"—untranslatable idiom that would be so useful to translate in writing of him. . . . But it is noted, rather, that conversation started easily and touched on "the most elevated subjects." So much did it remain on these heights that he perceived after a time that he was being *admired* for his ease in talking of the interior life. He was not going to put up with even so mitigated a favorable opinion of himself and showed it in his own way. "*Aren't* I a saint?" he enquired "maliciously."

But he was out and about the lovely palm-shaded town, among the mimosas and orange trees, the heavy-scented roses—all the exotic profusion that so recalled his ever more distant home-country—the great eucalyptus trees like those of El Llano on the canal so long ago. . . . He was pressed to visit equally exotic villas, "famous ones where is lived the life of the grand seigneur." They left him extremely cold. I do not think he was tempted to despise those who lived in such luxury, but certainly he pitied them. He finishes a letter to his friends in Spain: "From the nobility let us get down to the bare-foots. . . . I thank God for the grace of the priesthood. . . . I have reunited a disunited family, given Holy Communion to a child of ninety-three, confessed an old Italian workman and, between two strokes of the rake and bill-hook, talked Catechism to a Communist." He signed, as he often did, "The Miner."

Those were the things that allured him at Hyères as elsewhere, not the mimosas or the roses or the swaying palm branches on the Place des Palmiers, or even the ensanguined sunsets over the tideless bays and the mountains dark against the dying light. He could not help talking of his real preoccupations: his familiar letters in the original have a Sevigné-like perfection of spontaneity and wit, an overflowing of what was in him and, too, of what he knew his readers wanted to hear. And as he said, "Out of the abundance of the heart. . . ."

So that it was far from being egotism, still less boasting, which made him talk of the child of ninety-three and the Communist: those were his *events*, faint symbols of the great apostolate for which he burned. Very many of his letters are to his Provincial and are, I suppose, in the nature of an obligatory rendering of accounts, an obligatory truthfulness as regards his achievements.

To another friend, a Mexican confrère studying in Spain, who asked if there was nothing he required (April 20, 1926), he answered:

"What I require?

"1. Some patience. For after using mine for so long it is beginning to wear out.

"2. Some work. For this lazing life suits neither my character nor my nervous temperament.

"3. An old camel. You know the sort I mean: one with a hollow in its back, to use as a seat, for my visits to hospitals, clinics, sanatoriums, doctors, nuns and nurses.

"4. The gift of Faith (in case of impossibility of having the camel) in absorbing mixtures of chemical products.

"For, as for me, I believe in only one remedy: castor oil. . . ."

He then makes out a list of the medicaments that are his daily fare and concludes: "Is that a life, that?".

Not having the camel, he had to walk and did so whenever he had the strength. If these expeditions miscarried he reported them at the Maison de Famille and was always the first to laugh at himself.

For instance, in one of the incredibly ancient streets or lanes of the old town, one of those with great brick doorways that Caesar or Augustus may well have built, someone tried to be funny at the expense of the young foreign priest. This man's idea of being funny, as it is that of not a few brainless people, was the telling of a silly lie: "Someone is dying in that house"—pointing to a darkly sinister abode, and the speaker made off.

That was quite enough for the priest. He went straight to the house and the door was opened by its occupier, an ancient but strong man. . . . Father Pro explained whom he was supposed to have come to see, and why. As it could only be the ancient and by no means pietistic Samson, the latter let fall what he thought of the intruder. Father Pro, unable to absolve, still stuck to his point of trying to assist his indignant host, "between two curses trying to get in some heart-to-heart talk." The curses turned to blows which Father Pro parried and regretfully, but laughing, left the house. "His zeal," Father Dragon adds to his version of this story, "feared nothing and no one." Not even ridicule.

In the clinic itself was a subject for his zeal. The nuns had told him of Amédée who came to help in the garden after his day at a workshop. "Excellent boy at his job, Amédée, but . . . has never made his First Communion and no one can get him to—seems to have taken an oath never to go near a priest." To this challenge Father Pro, of course, rose. That very afternoon, as soon as he sighted Amédée, he made for him and engaged him in talk about the workshop—one of the things for which he had come to Europe from Mexico, he said, was to investigate the conditions of workers.

Amédée was bidden to a "gas" in Father Pro's room next day and arrived to find a substantial meal on the table. Cigarettes were lighted and all went gaily till Sunday Mass was mentioned. . . . Amédée fell into a deep silence. Father Pro "affectionately," we are told, insisted, and suddenly the young gardener came out with his story. As a child he had been at school at a Little Seminary and had been expelled for an act of insubordination he had not committed: he had vowed "never to let a curé come near him." "By dint of tact and kindness," Father Pro succeeded in breaking down this years-old determination and, after some weeks' instruction, the young workman *made* his First Communion, to his and Father Pro's intense contentment.

Amongst the invalid priests at the Maison de Famille was the curé of that island of Porqueroles in the Rade d'Hyères that from the town can be seen in its setting of sapphire-blue. The curé had been suddenly struck down with paralysis. Father Pro induced the chaplain to allow him to take his place with the poor man who was slowly getting to the end of his pilgrimage here below. There was nothing he did not do for this M. Dozon, say the Franciscan Sisters who still recall his touching devotion to the invalid. He heard the curé's general confession and toward the end gave him the Last Sacraments. He showed every intention of sitting up with the dying man, had not the Mother Superior quite severely intervened—this Father Pro, after all, was one of her sick-cases though he appeared to forget it. . . .

He could not in any case have closed his new friend's eyes; before that had to be done, he himself received a summons less final than that of the curé of Porqueroles it is true, but final enough: a letter from his Belgian Superior recalled him to Enghien. He was not making the expected progress at Hyères—or in Europe: he was to go back to Mexico.

He seems, as usual, to have reached the extremest conclusion—he was "condemned" he felt sure; he had not long to live. Why, he amazedly asked, hide the fact from him? He would make his sacrifice instantly: "To do good in Mexico, God can surely do without me!"

He went back to Enghien for a few days. It must have had a very special appeal for him from the fact of his having there been ordained. For, later, in the full stress of his time in the persecutions of Mexico, he signs a letter Miguel Enghien—an allusion to his hope of having received at St. Augustine's in the Belgian town, on August 25, 1925, the gift of intrepidity of the apostles and disciples of Christ. So Father Couvreur in his "Le P. Pro-Juarez," believes.

His exit from Hyères was characteristic. He traveled by the evening *rapide*, standing in the corridor to gaze out into the darkening country rushing by. Suddenly what seemed like a crowd of people issued in evident terror from a compartment. Father Pro approached, asked what was the matter: someone, a woman, was terribly ill inside. She was a consumptive back from an ineffectual cure in the South—she was bringing up quantities of blood. He went in, found her two companions had quite lost their heads, offered his services—

he was wanted, he believed, as both priest and helper. He took the little bowl from one of the terrified women and held it for the invalid—who was vomiting the most alarming volume of blood—till the crisis had passed. She was only a girl. This strange, dark, gentle priest was extraordinarily kind, extraordinarily comforting. Gratefully the poor girl listened to him as he tried to encourage her, spoke of fortitude in her sufferings, mentioned the Name of Jesus. Then she stopped him: "I am a Jewess."

It was a blow: the express was rushing on into the night, when it should stop who could say that this young woman, this sister, would be alive?

He spoke to her then of God, of sorrow for her sins, of the hope with which the Scriptures are filled: it was *his* hope that this soul "might go some little way towards a desire for Baptism": that she might gather something of what Christ is to the Christian. She seemed to understand him, to be well-disposed, but he had only time to sow the first seeds of truth. He was able at least, as she did not then die, to put her into the hands of a Catholic doctor who got her taken in at a hospital in Dijon.

These facts he reported in his letter of thanks to the Franciscan nuns at Hyères. He headed the paragraph "*Le Camail Rouge*," intending a cryptic reference to his nursing. The Sisters' dress comprises a red hood or *camail rouge.*

They were very fond of him at St. Augustine's, Enghien, very sorry when he had to leave them for so far away as Mexico. His professor wanted him to delay anyhow for a week and pass his theological examination for which he thought him qualified. Father Miguel thought otherwise: his head was not solid enough at the moment, he said.

On the other hand, it will surprise no one to hear that before leaving for Mexico the invalid conceived the idea—and got it put into execution—of a rush to Lourdes and back, a journey entailing two nights without sleep or food, in all probability in a third class carriage. . . .

He had, having taken a vow of poverty, no money. But that did not deter him either. In a most amusing letter to some well-endowed friend—about to be a priest—in Spain, he *asks* for the necessary funds.

He writes to acquaint the friend with his imminent departure from Europe "for the virgin and sunburnt wilds of my country." This has been arranged for him by his Rector "who is kindness in person" and who has not rested till he got the Provincial to recall Miguel. This recall will without doubt re-establish him, tired as he is by "cuts, slashes, injections and openings." The second thing he has to tell the friend is "very difficult, delicate, subtle and gigantic." It is that he has four Masses (most innocent, and even amusing simony!) that he can offer to say for the friend.

"Four Masses? Si Señor, four. However . . . (Ah! here comes the part which is thorny)." So that the friend shall not have too many days in which to think it over, he is to write by return of post to an address in Paris which will be given below. The friend was to write: "Miguelito, I accept thy four Masses and as a return I send thee (4 × 3 in good French mathematics equalling 15) 15 pesetas with which thou can'st give thyself the luxury of going to Lourdes and saying many things to the Virgin for me." "Ay! Padre, how your Spain has taught me to be—somewhat more than I already was—a fully-qualified gypsy, and to beg without conscience, alleging for all excuse my handsome face, which, to tell the truth, since the operations has got thinner than is reasonable and has taken on an aspect of mystic-piety which captivates the heart. . . . As francs are far from abundant I begged leave of the Superiors to be allowed to give a slight dig to a friendly soul, and, as the thing is humiliating, I decided to give it to you who already are aware of my thieving propensities."

The "thing" was, one has no doubt, "humiliating" in spite of his, so to speak, laughing it off, but he meant to get to Lourdes—and got there. The "dig" possibly, and not improbably one imagines, surpassed the Father Rector's (who was "kindness in person," it is true) prevision of it in giving the required leave for its administration!

"That this is an abuse of confidence I do not doubt," Miguelito goes on; "that it is a . . ." (does he mean an audaciously amusing semblance of simony? His dots give no indication.) "I do not doubt either; however my spoilt-child's caprices (*mis ganas de niño caprichoso*) have surmounted everything and . . . I write to you. On the 12th I shall be in Paris and on the 19th I leave from St. Nazaire." (For Mexico.) His suggestion, he says, of going to Sarriá to embark from there with "Father S." was not approved of. One wonders what other distances he may have thought of going in the state he himself describes as both weak and miserable. . . .

The money, needless to say, was sent and in a measure that he recognizes as far too large. From Vanves he writes with enthusiastic gratitude that the gift equals his own unparalleled audacity in asking for it. He was, with a charming simplicity and piety combined, utterly enchanted, quite boyishly overflowing. His letter affects to consider it an ill-usage that he, an innocent Mexican, should be sent traveling through the night, afar, so as to visit a grotto. . . . He will be revenged by the prayers and the *sort of things* he will ask for in those prayers for his benefactor. He is alarmed, he goes on to say, at the "*bien immense*" (he occasionally breaks into a few words of French since it had become the language he had habitually to use) that there is in the Parisians; —he, though an "Indian" and a miner, is treated "like a lord." He has been—his greatest devotion—to the chapel in the Rue Antoinette where St. Ignatius pronounced his vows; said an early Mass there and had been able to give numerous Communions. The luncheon (why or when is not indicated) will be "*chic*" but he trembles to think of his encounter with this "scented audience. . . . I shall have to show a French yarn of such poor quality. (*Yo tendré que mostrar la hilaza en francés de pacotilla.*)" It seems really to have been a repast requiring a certain self-possession, for the guests were to be, he says, "of all sexes, conditions and talents: a deputy, a consul, a carpenter, a marchioness, a 'shoemakeress,' a nun or two, a seminarist, a porter, and various of the feminine devout. And your brother, Miguel."

This fashion of ending a letter, he adds, in a fairly lengthy postscript, is Parisian—very brilliant. It suits him admirably as he does not wish to play the bear, but has little time. . . .

It will be seen, then, that he was at all times what is called "intensely human" in modern jargon; but that is better expressed as always perfectly natural. One feels that he never consciously tried to edify, that he was so natural, so sincere, as not even to know what would be meant by the attempt. His letters, to his Provincial, or his student-confrères, on the most sacred subjects have usually some "fun" in them; his funniest letters something spontaneously serious or even mystical.

Lourdes was all and more than he had expected. He seems to have approached it without looking to the right or the left, his eyes on the one goal of his swift pilgrimage, noticing neither the dancing waters—it was June—of the Gave as they, too, hurried to the Grotto, nor the splendor of the piled mountains behind the town. He went straight from the train to the Grotto, meeting in the street, by real good fortune or a kindness of Her whom he had come so far to honor, the bishop's secretary.

"He gave me on the spot leave to celebrate Mass. In the Basilica the last one at the high altar was ending. I began mine at nine and it lasted longer than usual: this was because the list of mementos held many for whom to pray in Mexico, Sarriá, Enghien, Paris, Brussels . . . and you know [to his friend in Spain] your family and mine, thanks be to God, have many members. From the church I went to the Grotto . . . all that, it is true, can be felt vividly but cannot be expressed. The poor and unhappy Pro saw nothing of what the thousands of pilgrims around him were doing. . . . How [he continues] can I have knelt so long, I who after five minutes on my knees of late am done for? I do not know. At ten I went to breakfast. I wrote four post cards and at 10:30 was back in the Grotto. Do not ask me what I said or did; I do not know; I was not yesterday the usual miserable creature. At three o'clock an Abbé approached me and said: 'If you continue to kneel there you will faint: I advise you to go to the Piscines; there, there is shade.' Why did he say that? What sort of face or bearing was mine? Another thing I ignore. I only knew I was at my Mother's feet and that I felt profoundly in me Her blessed presence. . . . I did what everyone else did: sang, prayed, kissed the ground, invoked Our Lady with arms extended. At 4:50 I was back in the train.

"I have been, therefore, to Lourdes. And if I did not visit the Calvary, nor see the river banks, nor the outward shape of the Basilica nor what it contains? All the same I went to Lourdes! That is, that going there, for me, was meeting my Mother in heaven; it was to talk, to pray, to her. And I met her, I talked and prayed to her. At 8:30 [next morning] I was back in Paris and at nine said Mass in the house. I could not sleep even for an hour. To-morrow morning at 8:30 I leave, and arrive at St. Nazaire at 5:30 in the afternoon. The liner leaves at midnight.

"My crossing will not be as hard as I thought, since Our Lady told me so. Ay, Padre, it was very painful to my wretched natural self to return to Mexico without health, without finishing my studies, to find my poor country ruined by its Government, not to find there my mother, that saint to whom I owe my life and for whose death I still weep. . . . But my journey to Lourdes has given me courage, and this journey I owe to the charity and delicacy of you and your family. . . ."

That humanly speaking he had been mad (he had said previously) he did not deny, nor that it was an imprudence to go two nights without sleep or food. However, what he would deny *never*—"*jamas de los jamases*"—was that he had spent one of the happiest days of his life.

He had the devotion of the saints to Our Lady. She was to him a most living reality, someone who in plain matter-of-fact was part, and a very great part, of his life on earth. His Spanish expression of that devotion is perhaps more ornate than it would be in our plainer English, but it is virile and rings true. The following is part of a prayer to Our Lady that he left: it does not lack courage:

"May I spend my days near thee. What I ask on my road of life is not the joy of Bethlehem; it is not to adore the Infant-God in thy virginal hands; I do not want to enjoy in thy humble house of Nazareth the happy presence of Jesus Christ, nor to join the choir of angels in thy glorious Assumption. I ask to have in my life the mockery and jeers of Calvary; I ask the slow agony of thy Son; the contempt, the ignominy and the infamy of the Cross. What I ask, O sorrowful Virgin, is to be close to thee, to *stand* near thee, to strengthen my soul by thy tears, to consummate my sacrifice by thy martyrdom, to sustain my heart by thy loneliness, to love my God and thy God by the immolation of my whole self."

One cannot doubt that he *meant* this. "I cannot say what my poor soul felt to-day," he wrote in the train leaving Lourdes. "Now I set out full of consolation."

On June 24 he embarked in the Cuba for his country that he had left in 1915, eleven years earlier. He was not only full of courage, but of joy. He thanked God fervently "for the great goodness He had shown him" and the thought of Enghien was in his mind, his ordination; his sufferings; Lourdes. Above all he exulted in being actually on the way to Mexico, to be going to give to its persecuted Church and people all that he had of courage and resource; his energies, enthusiasm and, possibly, his life. He had had that long day's "talk" with Our Lady at Lourdes and he seems to have swept aside the question of health and to have assumed that he would at long last be able to work and to work hard. He was right.

"Three more days [he wrote from the ship to a confrère left behind], and . . . I shall be in Mexico. Will it be difficult for me to get back, priest and Religious as I am? I do not know. I have confidence. I have prayed. [He had not only prayed but he had *begun to work.*] We are 525 passengers [he goes on] of whom 490 Mexicans, therefore all Catholics. God is always a Father to me, He spoils me. I am the only priest on board and my fellow-countrymen received me with the utmost frankness and kindness. No difficulty in saying Mass. Difficulty? But all the ship's officers are Catholics; they come daily to Mass. Really, God spoils me.

"Communion on the First Friday was touching; ladies, men, children, young men . . . three lads of 21 to 25 come every day and fight for the honor of serving Mass, and to Communion. I am, besides, occupied all day, for confessions, addresses, private talks and some games of chess have given me a splendid crossing. Do you not remember I was afraid of my journey? But He Who calls me to Mexico has given me all the facilities and even all the spoiling that a priest can have. Help me to thank Him.

"My health? . . . I no longer remember that I am ill. I eat everything and above all I sleep like you do. . . .

My face has changed. *Habeo faciem honestam, immo honestissimam.*

So gaily, ardently, he sailed back West like his remote Spanish predecessors, the great missionaries of the great days; they went to an uncertain fate, he to an almost certain one. He was popular on board, one makes out; he played chess, he prayed and worked. And all the time, as in his flight to Lourdes, he looked straight ahead. Beyond the lovely blue of those summer seas, where the sun sank in gold and crimson, were the blood-stained shores of his homeland; there alone, unhelped, forsaken it seemed by God and man, the Church of Mexico struggled with the powers of hell made manifest. He, since he was now an ordained priest, was quite simply and undramatically going back to take his place in the ranks.

CHAPTER X

MEXICAN priests were, of course, wanted in Mexico, for a population of about 14,000,000 Catholics. The foreign orders of Religious had been expelled.

The situation at the moment was tense. And here one may pause to note the extraordinary circumstance of Father Pro's return and that the Hand of God was most evident therein.

His constitution was so lowered that all attempts at re-establishing his health had failed. Yet it is at that precise moment that he is recalled to the very heart of the turmoil and battle of persecution.

One would imagine that a very delicate young priest would not have been the one of all others to recall, or to send, even, as at first intended, to missionary work in the Tarahumara Mountains. It may have been thought that mountain air would benefit him; as it turned out, the circumstances of the persecution were such that he had to go on to the capital itself.

In any case these matters are beyond one's competency. He *was* recalled to Mexico. He *was* able to do there a most wonderful work until the very end. How it actually came to pass, what exact human mechanism God set in motion, so that Father Pro's Provincial was induced to recall him, we cannot know. One may venture in all reverence to surmise, that He loved the burning love, the uncalculating generosity, that folly of the cross, perhaps not least that dear child-likeness and gaiety of His child and apostle, and so accepted his prayer and sent him back, half across the world, to receive his crown of martyrdom.

In "The Month" of October, 1926, appeared an article smuggled out of Mexico and necessarily signed only by the synonym "A Resident." "An Impartial Survey" is the title. So impartial is it, so restrained and competent, that I cannot do better than quote from it a few words that may indicate the exact situation with which Father Pro was about to cope.

> "The present quarrel between the Calles Government [October, 1926] came about in the following manner. The Government tried about a year ago to create a State-controlled religion by encouraging certain reprobate priests to seize different Catholic churches, and sustaining them therein and in their ministrations of religion in defiance of the Catholic authorities. The move failed, largely through the notorious character of the schismatic clergy so employed. Its failure has been followed by a succession of other blows, struck by the Government against the Church, this time in the name of the Mexican Constitution of 1917. . . . This famous Constitution of 1917 has been printed out summarily or in full, in so many papers that it need not be repeated here. We need only note the aim and object of certain anti-religious articles. By Article 3 education in all its branches, private as well as public is secularized. No teacher or book or emblem having any connection with religion is allowed. By Article 5 all religious Orders are outlawed. . . . Article 24 asserts complete Government control and supervision of all public worship."

In fact, the position in Mexico was much akin to that of Soviet Russia. Tchitcherin and the Soviet Ambassador

Stanislas Pesthovsky, indeed, assured Calles that he very perfectly understood and carried out the Soviet doctrines.

"The Catholic bishops [of Mexico, the article continues] in an open pastoral letter protested against the enforcement of these dormant penal laws. The Pope, in an encyclical, also raised his voice in protest. Both pleaded for constitutional amendment by constitutional means. . . . Then, in punishment of the spirit revealed by the Church heads, the grinding force of the Constitution was brought to bear . . . the heavy hand of the penal laws, now weighted with the utmost metal of their iron clauses. Nor were there lacking indications that the Government realized, even while denying it, the underlying gravity of the conflict it had provoked. By presidential decree the press was silenced."

Matters went from bad to worse: to all protests of Church and people the Government, composed of Bolshevistic Socialists, Freemasons, Jews and one Protestant pastor—Saenz, the Minister of Foreign Affairs—retorted by further severities. Rome and the Bishops still counselled patience and prudence to the people. A Catholic League of Defense was formed and, by a stroke of genius, organized a peaceful but most compelling boycott. By its provisions all unnecessary expenditure of whatever kind was to be avoided by Catholics; they undertook to forswear theaters, cinemas and all forms of amusement. As a result the cafés were nearly empty, money was withdrawn from the banks, finance was disorganized. "Dieu et mon droit" was the official motto of the League.

The followers of the Government were to grow exceedingly alarmed at the results of the boycott, yet

Calles would not give in. Nor did the heroic Catholic people of Mexico.

The boycott was to begin to take effect on July 31, 1926. Father Pro landed at Vera Cruz, a southern port of Mexico, on July 7.

Was it probable that this priest who had committed the "crime" of pursuing his studies abroad would be allowed to disembark? His ministry among the passengers of the Cuba had not added to the likelihood of his passing for anything but a cleric. This he fully realized and that he would not go free without a special protection from on high. He simply joined the other passengers in leaving the ship, without troubling to think out what he should say to the officials at the landing-stage.

"It was by a special dispensation of God," he wrote, "that I re-entered my country. . . . I do not know how I did it. The health bureau did not stop me; no one looked at my passports; at the Customs they did not even examine my luggage. . . . I left the port at six in the evening and arrived next morning at 7 A.M. at the capital which was henceforth to be my field of action."

Mexico City with its 800,000 inhabitants was a quite respectable field of action and "not without danger" as Father Couvreur rather quaintly remarks. More especially was this the case as on the fringe of the city was the presidential abode of Calles, the Alcazar of Chapultepec, on its charmingly wooded hill and surrounded by sumptuous park and gardens. Over the entire city brooded the dread and terror of the man who has been termed the Modern Nero.

Father Pro joined his Provincial at Lerdo but returned with him the same day to the house of Enrico Martinez in Mexico City.

By two o'clock that afternoon he was with his family, now comprising his father, Ana Maria and his young brother Roberto; Humberto was in prison! He had shown too much zeal in religious propaganda. After a dozen attempts to see this brother in his cell (it appears to be comparatively easy in Mexico to visit prisoners) Father Pro was successful. Seventeen months later the brothers were thrown back into prison together and left it for their common martyrdom.

In 1913 René Capistran Garza had founded the Association of Mexican Catholic Youth and had become in 1926 Vice-President of the New League of Defense. The members of both Associations were to give proof of unparalleled courage, resource and heroism: it was in working for both that Humberto Pro had got into trouble.

Father Pro, without a day's respite, set to work likewise.

The scene of his apostolate, the capital and commercial center of the United States of Mexico, stands over 7,000 feet above sea level in a valley all emerald green and shining with the waters of lakes Texcoco, Chalco and Xochimilco sinking one behind the other to the base of the snow mountains that encircle the town. Lovely these mountains in their veils of mist and blue, lovely the waterways about the city, the Viga Canal, between its tufted poplars, the market brilliant in winter with tuberoses, calla lilies, camellias white and rose, handfuls of violets for a coin—all the flowers that blow.

It is a city both incredibly old and very young; luxurious and in parts as fine as Paris, with which it has a special affinity. Paul Hazard in a "Revue des Deux Mondes," speaks of "that taste of old France, seasoned by a perfume of Mexico, wonderful and rare." There is French taste, French culture; women not only charming but witty—in the French manner, M. Hazard lets it be understood. There are mansions on its *avenidas* which those in Paris do not outshine, a famous Alameda, once the Aztec market, now glittering with fountains and the wealth of exotic tree and flower; a crowded life of fashion and commerce and, a little apart, the old colonial palaces, the Biscainas of rose-red stone whose great façades line an old square of gardens and trees. There are churches various and wonderful, from the vast Spanish cathedral on the vaster plaza of shading greenery, to the dim old churches of the people embedded in their buildings at every turn of a street.

It was of his return to this seething city, so brilliant to the eyes of a stranger, in reality so torn and distracted, that Father Pro wrote a few months later (November 13, 1926) : "Still half bewildered by the journey I was able to begin an uninterrupted course of ministry among the inhabitants of the capital, who, thanks be to God, supplied me with work by day and night; and who, according to all appearances, will not allow me to finish this letter; three times have I been interrupted! I say nothing as to the manifestation of faith caused by the closing of the churches. You will have known that, with all details, from other sources."

This closing, or emptying, of the churches had been occasioned by the manifesto of July 2, in which Calles had increased the proscriptions of the Constitution and which had brought the conflict to a climax.

The bishops had ordered their priests to withdraw, and to withdraw the Blessed Sacrament, from all churches sooner than submit the Eternal Church to State administration and control.

"After consultation with the Sovereign Pontiff and with his approbation and blessing, we order that from July 31 and until the revocation of our ordinance, all rites, all public religious functions requiring the participation of a priest, shall be suspended in all the churches of the Republic. Churches shall not be shut [even Calles had not dared to close those of the capital], the faithful may continue to frequent them for prayer. But the priests in charge must leave them. We confide our churches to the care of the faithful; they will guard, we are confident, with jealous care, the sanctuaries inherited from their ancestors. . . ."

The bishops had for long shown a moderation, an extremity of patience and dignity which had seemed only to inflame the maniac fury of the Government. Deputations, petitions with thousands, indeed millions, of signatures, had been cast aside as of simply no importance. All peaceable appeals for the revision of the constitution had been—actually—thrown into Governmental paper-baskets.

Now the bishops acted. This was the interdict . . . all but the most frightful anathema which can be put upon a Christian people. Not, as the bishops assured their people, aimed at them; far from it. For Mexico had shown, in the bulk, a courage and fidelity to God and the Church past any praise. This suppression of the central facts of religious life (*dearer* than life to almost the whole nation) was the one way left to the episcopate of bringing pressure upon the handful of misguided men attempting to govern the country: so long as the interdict remained in force the people of Mexico would be un-amenable to the anti-clerical Government.

So far the people, unorganized and unrepresented, had been held back by Rome and the episcopate of their country, from such recourse to arms as they might have been able to achieve.

"But," asked the writer, already quoted, in "The Month" "can the prelates indefinitely hold their followers to the middle path of refraining from violence?" It was the story of the early Christians re-acted: on the one side the armed and unscrupulous persecutors; on the other, the persecuted, withheld by their very principles from retaliation in kind.

The proclamation of the Episcopate had ended thus: "The life of the Church is that of its Founder; like unto Him the Church of Mexico is abandoned to-day to its worst enemies; she is mocked, she is scourged, she is reduced to a state like unto death. But yet a little while and she will rise again filled with vitality and youth, such as our eyes have not yet beheld Her."

History will recall this action of the Mexican episcopate as one of astounding wisdom, perhaps above all, of courage. To deprive a whole people, at such a moment, of the external aids of religion seemed of all things the most dangerous.

This was the immediate cause of the terrific work in which it now fell to Father Pro to assist. Roughly speaking, the whole of the inhabitants of the capital began to flock to its thirty-seven parish churches—there was so little time in which the Sacraments would still be administered—except to the dying. . . . Confessions were heard by the score; so many marriages to bless that for days the churches were filled with brides and bridegrooms and the more or less improvised paraphernalia of weddings; thousands were clamoring for the Bread of Life; innumerable children had to be baptized. The famous Sanctuary of Mexico, that of Our Lady of

Guadalupe three miles outside the city, was besieged with pilgrims, the incredibly rich Spanish Renaissance building filled from sunrise to sunset and later. Unending files of the faithful, society women barefoot, the poorest Indians, young men and girls, mothers carrying their babies, old men helping themselves along with sticks, children—all marching together to the shrine, singing, praying, crying for mercy. "The air was filled with songs of penance and of mourning," says Father Dragon.

Into this press of work Father Pro flung himself with the energy one might expect.

The big Jesuit church in the center of the residential part of the city is that of the Holy Family—La Sagrada Familia. It is a modern building, some nine or ten years old. Here and elsewhere Father Pro heard confessions.

"The suspension of all religious services was imminent," he wrote later, trying to give some slight idea of the turmoil, the frenzy, almost, of the population in view of the approaching July 31. "Thousands of the faithful came, during those days, to receive the Sacraments. I had therefore to be in the confessional from 5:30 A.M. till 11; in the afternoon from 3 to 8. Yet I was still fairly feeble (for I had a year of hospital and operations behind me). Twice I fainted 'in the box' and had to be carried out. . . ." Not very surprising, one would think!

Then came the fatal 31st, the feast day of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Father Pro said that day the last public Mass he was destined ever to say.

The Blessed Sacrament was now removed from all tabernacles. In the great Cathedral as in the small dark churches with their gaudy decoration and tinsel draperies dear to the gibes of the superb, dearer to the hearts of old men and women, to the simple love of *all* the little ones of Christ; the lamp of the sanctuary was extinguished, the red light that radiated hope and comfort to countless numbers of the poor and dispossessed. The bells were silenced, the gay bronze bells, messengers they too, to many, of the only joy in drab, or suffering lives; not a vibration in the black old streets or the desolating ugliness of the newer quarters of the workers' homes. "It was," says Father Dragon, "like breathing the air of the catacombs: sadness brooded over the unhappy country. The great Good Friday of Mexico had begun."

Calles, the virtual dictator—for the Ministers were *his* Ministers—still remained obdurate. He had not that folly of the Cross of the saints, but the folly of anticlericalism. Many of his measures were beneficial; he—as other Presidents—had been confronted on taking office with no small problem in the government of a predominantly uneducated people—reduced to ignorance by his predecessors—chiefly of Indian or mixed Indian and Spanish race. The writer in "The Month" recognizes in Calles' Government "a certain advance in political steadfastness and sincerity of purpose." But, unhappily for the country, he had opted for an advanced form of Socialism, akin in its anti-religious theories to Bolshevism. Certain it is that he was the personal enemy of Christ's Church; he never really disguised that fact while endeavoring to prove, at the same time, that "there was no persecution" of the Church. Another element that played its part in the disastrous régime was that of Freemasonry.

Yet another contributory factor was the Protestant and Non-Conformist propaganda which for years has flooded Latin America, and Mexico in particular, from the United States. Thousands upon thousands of dollars are poured yearly from above the dividing line of the Rio Grande, and Mexico City is the center of an intensive propaganda for Americanizing and Protestantizing the Latin.

Calles himself, a barely-educated soldier-of-fortune had perhaps had little chance of being other than he was. Of descent so mixed that it is not possible to assign to him any particular nationality, born and brought up in the hazards of the wildest and fiercest of border frontiers, history may find the explanation for his anti-religious excesses.

The Mexican Press had been muzzled; the American Press had joined the world Conspiracy of Silence; it is possible that the Protestant sects ignored the extent of the persecution. There were not wanting, however, private individuals amongst Non-Conformists to protest in no uncertain measure. The Trinity Episcopalian Minister preaching at Galveston, Texas, said: "It should be realized by our people in the United States that to remove the Roman Catholic Church from Mexico is to remove Jesus Christ—figuratively. And it means the obliteration of innumerable services of love and charity as well—the abandoning of the orphans and the aged indigent. It means the loss of perhaps 75 per cent. of all instruction and training of the young." (Galveston News.)

Meanwhile in Mexico City time was passing and the churches remained closed as far as services were concerned; there was no Mass, no priest in the confessionals or to be seen in the precincts of the churches—and no Blessed Sacrament.

But there *was* Mass all the same, confessions were heard and the Sacraments administered. The history of the catacombs, of the Elizabethan persecutions, was repeated. Chalices were filled and the consecrated hosts carried hither and thither in secret by the hands of priests at the risk of their lives.

Father Pro, in what may be called his rendering of accounts to his Provincial, wrote: "I organized what are known as 'Eucharistic Stations.' I assigned various places to the faithful where I distributed Holy Communion every day. On the First Friday of the month I assigned still more. Last First Friday I distributed twelve hundred."

His every-day and least "distribution" was three hundred. These stations were in private houses whose owners risked, at the very least, imprisonment and fine; it was almost impossible to say what they did *not* risk.

Mass was said in the first gray light of dawn, in "an upper chamber," someone at the door of the house where a password had to be given; watch-dogs were often used for greater precaution. People arrived silently; singly, or in couples, ascended swiftly; they were of all kinds and conditions; Indians who would place their huge hats on the floor beside them; ladies in mantillas;—the almost silent Mass would begin. No bell was rung; the priest officiated beneath his breath; all were calm but a pin might be heard to fall. At any moment the doors might burst open and the emissaries of the dread Prefecture of Police appear. . . .

All over Mexico this went on. An English friend writes (April 18, 1928): "Just before leaving Vera Cruz, after my illness, the Sister of Charity who nursed me, let me into the secret that a priest would be saying Mass very early one April morning and if I could be there at 5:30 A.M. I could go to confession, Holy Communion, and hear Mass if I never mentioned it to a soul.

Of course I got there. It was quite dark. To tell the truth I was terrified, as women never go about alone if possible, and of course not in the dark. In England it would have been broad daylight. There at 5:30 A.M. it was night with faintest streak of dawn. The priest was in lay-dress and several days' beard, but it was a great privilege. These dear nuns since we left have been disbanded and who knows what happened to them. . . . They did nothing but good in helping the sick and never asked a centavo for their services. . . . I got three times to confession. Once on a Spanish boat just in where there is always an oratory and chaplain."

In the capital it was possible to organize more thoroughly; the League of Defense and of Catholic Youth were marvelous in their unceasing labor and energy.

Father Pro wrote to his Provincial: "Here the work is continuous and hard. I can only admire what the great Chief lets me accomplish. Illness? minor complaints? care of them? I have not even time to think of such things; and yet I am so well and so strong that in spite of slight, very slight, setbacks, I could go on like this to the end of the world. . . . I am ready for anything, but should there be no major objection I would ask to stay here."

The heads of what, for brevity's sake, I will call The Leagues (Religious Defense and the Association of Mexican Catholic Youth) were constantly being arrested and thrown into prison. Others immediately replaced them. Their organization, radiating from its center in Mexico City, was a model of what such things can be; as one leader disappeared the ranks closed and each member moved up a place. Their extremely active printing-presses were from time to time discovered and seized; they replied by starting others, run so secretly that they outwitted the ten thousand spies, nearly all foreigners, employed by Calles.

Catholic leaflets were circulated as if by magic precisely as in Brussels during the Great War when the inhabitants carried on propaganda under the very noses of the invaders.

The Catholics of Mexico, for reasons to be dealt with later, had been till the persecutions, unorganized. This state of things was now remedied by incredible exertions. For example, a flotilla of small balloons that let fall on the city a downpour of propaganda, was sent up by the A. C. J. M. (Association of Mexican Catholic Youth).

Religion had been entirely suppressed in the schools; —regiments of catechists were formed, and patrolled the country; young men of all classes engaged as catechists. The priests had, among other tasks, that of superintending these voluntary teachers.

Father Pro received his catechists, especially those of the "Catholic Youth," with which he was constantly in touch, at several different addresses. "No one knows where I live," he wrote. "I get letters at four different places."

In the midst of these various preoccupations he, at first, had time to cast a longing glance at his own final theological examination. His professors at Enghien, he told his Provincial, had already given him his thesis before he left, he had even begun it and should have passed, his professor thought, but for the cable recalling him. *Now* what was he—Miguel—to do? Obviously he wanted what the Provincial wanted, he said, and he would leave the matter to him but . . . "the third year of probation" did call aloud to him.

For the Jesuit course of theology does not end with the priesthood, but continues for another year and even so would normally be followed by a "third year of probation" or tertianship; a kind of final novitiate.

It was to the completion of his dedication to the Society that Father Pro's thoughts turned even in the midst of his work in Mexico. But soon he was to find himself so beset by this work and by the added care of families reduced to indigence by the disintegration of the social fabric of the country, that he had to set his longing on one side.

The persecution had not till then actually reached its climax. On September 21, 1926, the bishops requested an interview with the President. Calles evaded every proposition of the delegate of the Episcopal Committee: demand for reform of the Constitution, he said, must be presented to Congress and must submit to its ruling—a perfectly correct reply had it not been that Congress meant Calles. Nevertheless, the Bishops' petition was so presented two days later with two million signatures of citizens supposed to possess the vote. The petition was, of course, rejected.

The police had by now got on to the track of the Catholic Leagues.

We find Father Pro writing:

"In spite of the strict Secret Police surveillance (there are in Mexico more than 10,000 agents), I can baptize, marry, and take Viaticum to the dying. I have even come across the dying in places where I have been called for other duties. My first incident had for its theater one of my Eucharistic Stations. It was six o'clock in the morning; I was half way through the Communion when a maid rushed in crying: 'The police! The police are there!' The faithful were terrified. 'Keep calm,' I said to them; 'conceal your religious emblems and disperse into the different rooms of the house: above all, no noise.' I was wearing that day a cap and a light gray suit that from long usage now verged on dark gray. I took out a cigarette and inserted it in an enormously long holder. Then I hid the Blessed Sacrament on my breast and received the intruders.

" 'There is public worship going on here,' the police said to me.

" 'There is not,' I said.

" 'Yes, yes. There is public worship here.'

" 'Well, this time you will have to own up you have had your legs pulled.'

" 'How pulled? We saw the priest come in here. Anyhow we have orders to visit and search the premises. Follow us!'

" 'I like that! That is the last straw! Follow you? And by what right can you try and make me? Show me your warrants. However, if you are bent on it, go all over the house and if you find public worship going on, come and tell me so that I can hear Mass.'

"They started going over the house and to prevent worse happening I went with them telling them beforehand what they would find behind every door. But unhappily it was the first time I had seen the other rooms, so that it happened to me to announce a bedroom and to fall into a study. . . . 'This is a work-place'—and it turned out to be a dressing-room. . . . But they did not find the Curé and the clever Secret Service then set themselves to guard the door of the house; I left them, pretexting my occupations, which alone prevented me from staying with them to assist at the capture of the priest in question who mocked their vigilance with so much cynicism. I went at once and distributed Communion at other 'Stations' and that done I returned to see them, but there was still no Curé. . . ."

The leopard had not changed his spots! There was an irresistible sense of fun and daring in the worst moments for the hunted "Curé." He was not yet personally marked down for pursuit; later when he was, he did not alter.

CHAPTER XI

THE Mexican Church, although greatly despoiled, still owned property which could be seized. Some writers assert that the persecution, judging by the fines inflicted, was largely engineered for financial reasons.

Calles, it is true, regarded the Church as his country's enemy, whatever money could or could not be extracted from Catholic prisoners.

In launching his extremest measures, he had counted on the passivity of the Church herself and of her children. He was undeceived, but the persecutions meanwhile revealed to Mexico the fact that another passivity —that of the class that should have been the governing class—had in the past all but ruined her.

The episcopate, therefore, after the uselessness of their repeated protests had been proved, started what had been described as the public examination of conscience of their flocks. The fault of Catholics was not, as Calles maintained, that they had taken too much part in politics, but not enough! In the seventy years of Revolution, misgovernment and oppression, Catholics had neglected their duties as citizens in (1) allowing themselves to be pushed on one side, (2) in their consequent general abstentionism, (3) in constituting themselves exiles in their own land, and in abandoning the attempt to stem the tide of government by such men as those then in power. God was punishing this neglect of duty, this egotism, by the hands of the persecutors. So said the bishops.

All this was true, yet the difficulties of acting otherwise had been such that it would ill become an outsider to venture to sit in judgment on so difficult a matter.

One fact is that too many of the great landowners and of the aristocracy, holders of ancient Spanish titles of nobility, were, to a disastrous extent, absentees. They drew fabulous fortunes from estates as large as English counties, had palaces scarcely visited in Mexico and other large cities, but lived in Paris, London, or Madrid sometimes owning mansions in all three places simultaneously. Revolted by the appalling Governmental crimes and follies combined of their native land they had left it, forgetting that, without the support of the most influential class, the fate of their fellow-countrymen would be indeed hopeless. This, while exonerating the rest of the Catholics from over-much blame, accounts only too well for their unorganized and passive condition.

Late, though not too late, the non-absentee landowners, the *haute-bourgeoisie*, lawyers, men of letters and others, perceived that the civic spirit must be created in the people.

"Let Catholics," Bishop Manriquez of Huejutla, addressed his flock, "repair their sins of omission, affirm their civic rights; let them courageously resist the destroyers of the laws of humanity. . . . Let all, old and especially the young, sacrifice pleasure and fight the fight of God, never retreating until all confiscated liberties are reconquered. So shall we obtain from God the cessation of the chastisement of our culpable indifference. Then will He bring us from the catacombs to the sunshine of liberty."

To this pastoral, it may be said in parentheses, Calles replied by the arrest and "imprisonment, as of a desperate criminal," of the Bishop.

A joint pastoral letter of the episcopate, backed by a letter from the Cardinal Secretary of State confirming it in the name of Pius XI and declaring the acceptance of the Calles' decrees to be apostasy, followed that of the imprisoned bishop.

The reaction of Catholics to these appeals was instantaneous and magnificent. They had been hopeless and, therefore, useless: now they awoke as from a long and disastrous trance. The Catholic youth of Mexico above *all*—as the hope of the future—had to be taught their civic duty. Father Pro was given the charge of "*Chef des Conferenciers.*"

"My rôle," Father Pro wrote to his Provincial, "consists in preparing those who are to address big crowds."

His group developed rapidly and with enthusiasm. Under the guidance of a directing committee of three, presided over by a young engineer Luis Segura, a singularly handsome and charming youth who was to die alongside of Father Pro and his brother, the group shortly numbered 150 members. Father Pro was constantly in touch with them; they called—at his four addresses—for advice on every sort of question, philosophical, theological, political, moral. They were all, he said, young men of talent and promise.

From now onward his life was to be one of incessant agitation in which he yet contrived to remain in intimate relation with God. He had longed—how ardently we know—for an apostolate, to be of use to souls as he had prayed in far off, peaceful Enghien. Can he have ever contemplated quite so active an apostolate—one in which his only prayer was action, in which he can scarcely have had breathing space, still less a moment in the day in which to meditate or to think? Certainly he would never have bargained with God. And not long before his death he was to write: "And yet here in the turmoil of work, I am amazed to find that in the midst of such dangers God gives us the extraordinary help of marvelous graces. I am surprised to find how intimately one feels His presence when discouragement tries to lower one's soul." This was the solitary occasion, I think, in which he so much as mentions the word discouragement.

He had always, because of his insomnia, had the night in which to pray. But in these latter times one imagines insomnia to have been cured with the other ills which he discarded so carelessly; he must have written his long rendering of accounts to his Provincial at night, also his letters to friends anxious for his safety, in Spain and elsewhere, when his long day was over. And then one hopes that he fell into his much-needed bed and slept his short night right through.

To the outside world, he may have seemed all that time in Mexico to have lived by bread alone, to have been so besieged and battered by activities as not to have possessed his soul or to have had a second in which to consider it. To have been energetic and courageous beyond measure but, above all, still the jester, the gay, almost endevilled dodger of police and spies and the hundred traps laid for him. His letters, or such as reach us, were in parts almost those of the ragging student he so much resembled in his youthful appearance (in lay clothes, of course) as to escape for long the detection of the ever-watching police.

Yet that he did long, too, for prayer, for recollection, one cannot doubt. Wistfully enough he answered a correspondent: "Oh, yes, I do long for the quiet of our 'residences,' for that calm which allows of our quietly fulfilling our ordinary ministry." But very quickly he catches back the words: perhaps he sees in them some questioning of the will of God, some repudiation of his longed-for utility to souls. He understands now, he goes on to say, the fuller meaning of "My Grace is sufficient for thee."

Meanwhile the quiet resistance of the people took its course. The Archbishop of Mexico addressed them. "The image of Christ crucified must sustain us. . . . Remember that the faith and eternal salvation of all Catholic Mexicans is in peril. . . . It is urgent that we do not fail, that we do violence to Christ and His Mother."

The whole episcopate was magnificent; Pius XI never ceased to say so and to commend their people equally in *their* sphere of action.

The crowd was undismayed, ready *not* to fail, to do what violence it could to Christ and His Mother, and none other that was deliberate. There were occasions when in self-defense it fired back at the so-called army, but the shooting of Obregón by the peon Toral was the single case of assassination by a Catholic during the whole persecution:—Toral acted on his own initiative and was unsupported by any other Catholic. Indeed it is by no means yet proved that his act had not behind it a political significance, one far removed from that of Catholic interests. It was not till all else had long failed them that the Catholics rose in legitimate revolt and took to the field.

On October 12, fifty thousand men and women tramped out to Guadalupe the place of pilgrimage that is the very font of popular devotion, that is enshrined so dearly in the hearts of Mexicans that the Holy Father has endowed it with unheard of privileges: Priests can say three Masses consecutively at the Shrine; Mass may there be celebrated at midnight.

On October 31 came the Feast of Christ the King under whose banner the entire nation is placed, in whose actual name the persecution was faced. Words at first almost fail Father Pro to describe what occurred on that occasion at the national shrine.

"For the Feast of Christ the King there was here a manifestation . . . the most grandiose . . . the most sublime . . . the most divine. The pilgrimage to the Basilica began at four in the morning and ended at 7:30 at night. An uninterrupted stream of people—eighty or eighty-four per cent. of the inhabitants—passed before the blessed image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The members of the A. C. J. M. [Catholic Youth] kept order and such order that the Municipality of Guadalupe congratulated the Archbishop. I was there from 9 A.M. to 11 and from 3 to 9; impossible to tear myself away. Thousands and thousands of folk bare-foot [a not unusual way of making pilgrimage in Latin countries] others on their knees along the whole avenue of Persevillo, all saying the Rosary and singing; poor and rich, workmen and gentlemen in groups. I saw one family of the middle classes—eight people—all bare-foot, the father carrying the boots of them all. I saw a young man of the highest social rank with bleeding feet in the Avenue saying his Rosary as he went. I saw twenty old women—but this I did not like—with crowns of thorns on their heads. I saw Monsignor Mora y del Rio [the Archbishop] arrive at 4 P.M. like any other pilgrim and I heard the *vivas* and the enthusiasm in and out of the Basilica. At five

I was going to leave with Mendez M. . . . when we saw a group of men-servants accompanied by workmen singing in the streets that led to the Basilica. But the singing was rather 'between the teeth.' . . . 'Fellow-countryman,' I said to my companion, 'this is the moment,' and by dint of elbow work and pushings I got into the group: sustained by my friend's powerful voice I sang at the very top of mine: 'Thou shalt reign!' When these poor people found two conductors leading the music they grew enthusiastic and it was then there was some singing! Very shortly we outsang the thousands of people round the esplanade of the Basilica and five minutes later everyone was singing hymns and shouts for Christ the King, the Pope, the Bishops. There was no disorder although the fire brigade [often used for turning water on the Catholic crowd and on Catholic ladies!] had arrived at 8 A.M. and although General Cruz twice inspected the Basilica. The young organizers kept order in the entire quarter and the police spent the day leaning against the trees and without molesting anyone. Poor men! They were the first to range themselves on our side!

"Yes, the terrible trial through which we are passing has only increased the number of resolute Catholics, it has even given us martyrs; one can call by no other name those twenty valiant young men of the A. C. J. M. assassinated in the vilest way, and many others whose names we do not know, for the Press is muzzled.

"Triumph will not be long delayed: the power of our enemies is great, they have money, arms and lies, but it will fall like the statue seen by Daniel stricken by a little stone from heaven. . . . Already the splendor of the resurrection can be foreseen precisely because the darkness of the passion is almost at its height. From all sides news comes of outrages and vengeance; the victims are numerous, the list of the martyrs grows every day. Oh, if I could draw the lucky number! . . .

"You know already that the Holy Father has promised to canonize our young martyrs and that he himself has offered to the Basilica of Guadalupe the monstrance presented to him. . . . These fatherly demonstrations of the Roman Pontiff have made a deep impression on our people.

"In Domino,
"El Barretero [The Miner]."

The General Cruz alluded to was the dreaded Chief of Police. But not even he would have dared to interfere either in the Basilica or with the vast crowds there gathered.

That day, in front of a church in Mexico City, Catholics dared to stop a governmental car with cries of "Long live Christ the King." Soldiers were immediately ordered to fire on the crowd, the Catholics for once replied. There were deaths on both sides. There were four hundred imprisonments. Quite young girls who were among the arrested were savagely flogged while not ceasing to declare that "they would remain good Catholics."

Calles meanwhile had a certain difficulty in maintaining his position.

Already on October 19, owing to the boycott and the general disorganization of society, the Bank of Tampico had failed. I find it asserted that the English Bank of Mexico had done likewise. The Chambers of Commerce, greatly perturbed, announced to Calles that they could no longer see their way clear—Calles dissolved them. The public treasury was at a low ebb; the peso had sunk to half its normal value.

Calles, unwilling to admit his original misgovernment in the domain of religion, blamed only the clergy. For a moment, at his wits' end, he tried corruption. He suggested to the Mexican clergy the constitution of a national Church, independent of Rome. He promised in return the restoration of such churches in the country as had been sequestered and a part of the possessions of the Church. For robbery had gone forward on a quite gigantic scale.

The refusal of the clergy was firm and unanimous. The anger of Calles was proportionate. He reiterated the laws of July 31 and forbade even the diffusion of handwritten leaflets. This, in a capital where such things, printed or typed, simply seemed to rise up from the pavements and, once at least, to fall from heaven, appears an almost touching exhibition of the man's real powerlessness.

Meanwhile Calles had any bishops he could secure either imprisoned or conducted to the frontier. Many priests had by that date, as a matter of fact, been killed all over Mexico.

"There is," wrote Father Pro, "a frightful dearth of priests. The people are dying without the Sacraments and those priests there are cannot cope with it." This naturally further enflamed his zeal. "The Catholics are resisting," he wrote again, "the reprisals will be terrible, especially in the towns of Mexico. The first to suffer will be those who have *put their hand* into the religious question. . . . And I who have had mine in up to the elbow! God grant that I may be among the first or, from another point of view, among the last [to be taken]. In any case may I be of the number!

"If that happens, mind you all get ready with your petitions for when I am in Heaven. . . ."

On December 4 the affair of the balloons already mentioned, took place. Six hundred balloons of about three yards in diameter, were sent floating over the city. The "Universal" of next day described how about midday the people of Mexico had had the pleasurable surprise of observing this flotilla rising lightly from various quarters of the town. Each balloon bore the shield of the League and in huge letters the word "Boycott." Leaflets descended first in a green, then white, then red, rain of fluttering sheets. The people, greatly intrigued, fell upon them, the police fell upon the people, for the leaflets contained the somewhat scathing comments of "Mexican Youth" on their Government's behavior.

Arrests naturally followed . . . they constantly occurred for no particular reason and the Prefecture must have been enchanted at so definite an occasion.

Readers of the many-colored papers were borne off as sort of forerunners of better things; then the police arrested the supposed organizers of this aerial attack. No *names* were known to the police at this time and Father Pro was not yet a marked man. But there were suspicions. . . . Probably someone did or said something a trifle imprudent, at any rate some leaders were pounced upon. His personal appearance varied so greatly! He was thirty-five by now, but he looked very much younger. "Slim and elegant" we are told, "he passed easily for the student he affected to be." Sometimes he grew a moustache which completely put off the somewhat simple-minded spies who were looking for a priest, sometimes he cut it off. He must have borrowed innumerable clothes, for he varied his toilette as often as the most accomplished woman of fashion. He was, too, it will be remembered, a past-master in all theatrical effects and his plastic features lent themselves to whatever mould he chose.

Whether Father Pro had or had not anything to do with the balloons has not transpired. His brothers certainly had.

"Humberto and Roberto," he wrote gaily, "who like myself have an atavistic bee in their bonnets, were plunged up to the neck in the affairs of the League; and as promoters of the famous balloons, drew down on us the attention of *our friends* the Government.

"On December 4, the day when they launched the balloons, Bandala came and searched the house at home. He found nothing there; he gave orders, however, to arrest any man entering from midday to seven at night. I was the only one to enter the house and the only one of the family to visit the elegant palace [the prison] of Santiago Tlaltelolco! What memories!

"At seven in the evening I was dragged off to prison in company with other young men; they took us between two files of soldiers; we were seven, arrested on account of the famous balloons. The lieutenant who received us at Santiago, on reading the official notice, laughed and said: 'To-morrow we shall have Mass.'

" 'This is going badly,' I said to myself *in petto*, 'they have spotted my status.'

" 'Mass?' we all said in chorus, 'Mass?'

" 'Yes,' the lieutenant answered, 'for there is a priest among you.'

" 'It *is* going badly,' I said to myself, 'very badly.' We all looked at each other to see which was the unhappy priest who accompanied us.

" 'He is a Miguel Augustin,' went on the lieutenant.

" 'Stop!' I said aloud. 'That Miguel Augustin is I. But it is as probable that I shall say Mass to-morrow as that I shall sleep on a mattress to-night.'

" 'And what about this?' pointing to the 'Pro' which followed my other names.

" 'That is only my surname; it is not the abbreviation of *presbitero.*' [Spanish-speaking priests sign after their names the abbreviation Pbro, the short for *presbitero* or priest.]

"Night came on; we spent it under the stars. Orders were: try to worry the prisoners. And did they not obey orders! A big cement bed, that is to say, the entire courtyard, was put at our disposition with very high pillows—those were the walls—and with no other blankets than that of the night air. All seven of us huddled together for the cold was exceptional. [It was December, and nights in Mexico City, 7,500 feet, can be extremely cold.]

"We began to say the Rosary, to sing half aloud all we knew of sacred or profane; then we snoozed without any consideration for the sentinels watching us. I who have passed such long hours at the Observatory of Granada taking the altitudes of the stars and who found that they went too slowly! The next day they were going to wake us with buckets of water but, as we were not asleep, at the first drop we started running about to the laughter and whistling of the soldiers.

"Our purse contained three piasters, enough to pay for a saucepan of orange leaves, boiled and without sugar, that seemed to us like nectar, for the frost had stiffened us like icicles.

"At midday I left the prison; my companions, more favored than I, only got out next day. I had to present myself twice to make declarations. To declare what? I do not know and I have never known. The whole thing was a farce, during which I made fun of these good officials in a half-witted tone which allowed me to tell them some home-truths while comprising nothing.

"However, now I think of it, I am surprised they did not shoot me for one phrase I used. For before letting me go they asked: 'Are you prepared to pay such and such a fine? For Señor Calles is very angry about the affair of the balloons.'

" 'No, sir,' I replied, 'I am not prepared, for two reasons. The first is I haven't a farthing. The second is, that if I had, I would not, to save my life, have it on my conscience that I had given *half* a farthing for the up-keep of the present Government.'

"After this comedy my activities have been reduced; all the same I have been allowed to prepare for Christmas in sixteen refuges and the Good Shepherd by instructions, Benedictions and General Communion on December 25.

"This was my last public exploit, for on the 29th [December] a band of reservists invaded the house at home with the order to arrest all my relations. In vain did I affect the utmost valor; in vain I begged them most tenderly, in vain invoked influences and connections: their hearts of stone melted only under the fifty piasters I gave them; but my father, my two brothers and I had to turn out with nothing but what we had on our backs and take refuge amongst our relations and friends with whom we have lodged from that day to this.

"A thousand versions have got about; the one that obtains is that I was the author of the leaflets 'of the army' [?] and that my brothers were responsible for the balloons: the two things are false."

Obviously he means that Humberto and Roberto were not the *originators* of the scheme. He had already described them as its promoters.

Nevertheless Father Pro had, when these "versions" reached his Superiors, to lie low for a time. His orders evidently were that he should be prudent, even that he should not go about for the time being. He writes pathetically to his Provincial:

"Shut up in a little room, with no scenery but that of our neighbor's yard, forbidden to show myself much, I spend my days turning over and over books and papers, in preparing a bit for my exam. . . . Obedience is better than sacrifice; so I shall not stir. . . .

"However," it is not *in* him not to continue, "folks have such need of spiritual help; every day I hear people have died without the Sacraments; there are no more priests to defy danger; from obedience or fear they stay at home. If I gave my little contribution of a grain of sand, as before, it would be to expose myself; but to do it with discretion and measure does not seem to me rash. . . . Between rashness and fear there is a middle course; and between excess of prudence and audaciousness, there is a middle course. They fear for my life! My life? . . . but what is that? would it not be saving it to lose it for my brethren?

"Certainly one must not expose one's self idiotically," he continues, not without a certain guile. "But the sons of Loyola! . . ." (February 19, 1927.)

His Superiors must have been torn between prudence and zeal; between a proper care of his life—an extraordinarily valuable life, too, at such a time—and the thought of those daily deaths he describes "without the Sacraments." They knew, as Father Dragon tells us, that this soul of fire—"*cette âme de feu*"—*could* not rest in inactivity, must consume itself in anguish cut off from what so cried aloud for help.

He re-entered the arena.

Needless to say he was nearly caught on many occasions. But he had, to count on, his own brilliant ingenuity and—Providence who would not suffer him to be "taken" a moment before that appointed one for which, in his heart, he hungered.

From the month of January onwards the Government had begun, as it were officially, to molest the clergy. Monsignor Diaz, Archbishop of Mexico, then Bishop of Tabasco, was arrested, then exiled. A few days later, eighty priests from all parts of the country were brought to the capital and thrown into prison; later three hundred from the State of Jalisco. Two of these priests had had their wrists broken by the soldiery for having said Mass . . . no doctor had been allowed to attend to them. Members of the Leagues Committees had been caught and likewise imprisoned. There was therefore a whole field of action in which to supply not only spiritual but corporal assistance.

Father Pro, quite naturally, succeeded in getting the entrée to the State prisons. "They are the places I frequent most," the Provincial had the not altogether unmixed happiness of hearing, "for they are brimful of

Catholics. I take in food, pillows, money, cigars, etc. If the warders only knew what kind of a bird I am! I rather wish they did, so that I could be inside for a fortnight or so."

The warders continued guileless. "My student's swagger gets me off any amount of suspicion; no one worries about my real avocation; I go about sometimes with a cane, sometimes with a magnificent police-dog I was given some time ago, sometimes on my brother's bicycle (I owe him already a fine bruise on my left arm and a lump on my head). So on, night and day. . . ."

"It would be impossible to say," writes a Mexican Jesuit who was with him in Mexico City during all this time, "with what ardor Father Pro 'multiplied' himself for the good of souls. The Government frequently gave orders for his arrest, but always, without his activities in the least slowing down, he succeeded in escaping from the hands of the legalized assassins. . . . I was able to register the great danger to which he was continually exposed; but he desired one thing only: to shed his blood for Jesus Christ. How often have I myself heard him express this desire! He was often in prison but when the term of his ardent wishes seemed quite near, he was again set at liberty."

His letters continued to show the utmost calm. "Twenty days ago a warrant for my arrest was sent out; but no one seems to take any notice of it and yet I do not hide: I do what I have to do in full daylight . . . or under the electric lights, for sunlight does not suffice."

CHAPTER XII

THE prolonged studies, in which Father Pro had kept before him the use to which they might be put in the pulpit, now bore fruit in a different setting to that which he had envisaged on the hill overlooking the blue bay of Barcelona, or in the romantic shade of the Alhambra at Granada. His time at Enghien and the busy happiness of the white retreat-house at Fayt were likewise to be made use of. He actually began to give retreats!

After some imprisonment or other annoyance he writes jubilantly: "I took my revenge in giving retreats right and left." . . . This kind of jubilation was always accompanied by his real humility: over and over again he speaks in his letters of being a mere handle or instrument that God deigns to use. He is not more, but certainly *as*, simple and natural as he is humble: the thing that *is* he says. As for instance: "I begin to think out seriously the way not to let my vain glory inflate itself because of the numberless exploits in which I was successful: it is the grace of God which produces conversions." For conversions and graces of all kinds followed his ministrations. Neither does his sense of humor ever fail him even on the subject of the retreats. This is how he describes his first attempt:

"To tell the truth I was rather frightened; it is a ministry which I had never exercised.

"I got my hand in with an audience of about ninety old ladies. Their ejaculatory prayers and sighs, their sobs and groans, showed me something very clearly and that was that if I was able to play upon the chords of sentiment I myself had considerable difficulty in repressing the laughter of my natural man. I judged it more prudent to break off short with the feminine species and to attack the masculine.

"Imagine fifty noisy motor-drivers, the sort who wear the Tejano headgear, a lock of hair well over one eye, and spitting marvelously out of one side of their mouths. Lads of gold, as a matter of fact, in spite of their slightly rough and not too attractive exteriors. . . .

"No need to insist on the seriousness of these conferences. They took place in a big yard bordered with old iron railings. As for me, I was dressed like a mechanic, a cap well down over my forehead, and rubbing elbows with my sympathetic audience. . . . May God bless all the chauffeurs of the world!"

Delighted with his first success he grew bolder. How he succeeded in getting together a group of not too-pious persons is not told—a group of employees of the Government!

"There were about eighty of them, free, easy, talkative; afraid of nothing, not even the devil.

"But there was even more good done perhaps than with my chauffeurs. I should have liked to see you in the middle of that lot, harried as if by hounds . . . they all maintaining that the soul is mortal, hell nonexistent. Ah! I must own I sweated ink! but I had more than my money's worth when I finally saw them *all* at Communion and could count up twelve remarkable conversions. I say remarkable, so radical had been the change in these souls that, wrongly led, had taken the wrong turning. But you are aware of the poorness of my abilities. My vain glory did not come into it. I could 'touch with my finger' the grace of God which alone worked these conversions. The whole force of my arguments, all my efforts, my attacks and sallies to try to make an impression on them were of no use. I saw it myself: it was the grace of God which touched their souls, making use of the simple phrases I had to invent as I went along. Praised be God my Father Who is so good, so good!"

It was not an easy matter to organize these retreats. Sometimes Father Pro went quite far afield into the country; at other times the retreats were in the town itself, or in the suburbs.

The retreats were organized in the following way.

Some courageous Catholic lady would gather together a group of friends, and the exercises of the retreat would then be given in different houses; usually they too, like Mass, began at daybreak. In the evening the priest would name the meeting-place for next morning. Tickets of admission were obligatory and people arrived as if for some business affair. It would have been difficult to explain this "affair" to the satisfaction of the police.

The Rosary was usually said before the sermon. The preacher sat in an ordinary arm-chair but probably near a little improvised altar: he was in civil dress and often had a flower in his buttonhole! He had to preach without a thought of the possible arrival of one or more of the ten thousand "agents" of Calles. Then there was a short time for meditation, and then breakfast at which the retreat-giver presided if the house were a private one.

The ladies then suggested that their husbands, and *their* friends, should do likewise, and then the meetings would be at night. Once, Father Dragon tells us, there was a reunion on the sixth floor of a great block of offices and in the midst of desks and typewriters among which the men knelt for the Rosary.

Once to dispel suspicion—a somewhat hazardous method of doing it, perhaps—the service took place immediately opposite the Court House and close to the Procurator-General's offices.

Yet the retreats were by no means a laughing matter, however cheerily one might envisage them. In January the Catholic Youth League, which helped in the organization of all such matters, had five of its members arrested, *tortured* and shot. On the following Good Friday, at the time when Father Pro was giving the Exercises to a large group of people in Mexico City, Manuel Bonilla, a working typographer, aged twenty-three, President of the League, was suspended, from midday to three o'clock, to a tree, arms and legs attached in the form of a cross, *because* it was Good Friday. . . . Christ showed him a further grace of likeness to Himself, for Bonilla was "sold" by a farmer with whom he had dined. He was finally taken down from his "cross" at three o'clock and shot—this at Salazar near Mexico City.

Bonilla had written to his sister that morning (using a Spanish and Mexican turn of phrase in writing the Sacred Name): "God Our Lord has willed to take my blood and my life. I am tranquil in the face of the sacrifice."

On that Good Friday, Father Pro gave "the points of meditation" to a group of professors; in another place his retreat; a sermon on consolation in a poor quarter of the town, and was heartbroken that he could do no more.

"Oh, that I could triplicate!" he exclaimed. "That I could multiply a hundred times!"

For his "conversions" too, were multiplying. One would think that his ordinary daily work in scattered and constantly varying localities would have taken all his time. That he managed to hear of, and to secure contact with, "outside" cases must be put down to the fervor of the Catholics, to that of his young followers of the A. C. J. M. and his own zeal upon which all knew they could count at any moment of the day or night.

Once he was brought into touch with a dying woman, a theosophist. "For an hour I had to listen to the most furious vociferations which human lips can pronounce. I had heard nothing like it among the miners. Yet she was very ill. She blasphemed and cursed all that we have that is most sacred: the saints, the Sacraments, and even the most holy name of Our Lady. I *worked* for the conversion of this really hellish tongue. At the end of six days she was saying nothing else but Aves and Credos. How miserable that lack of religious education! Poor soul! She will certainly die shortly, from the after-effects of an operation. To-morrow morning early I am to take her Holy Communion."

He has, naturally enough, not time to tell the Provincial of *all* he did.

"What a lot I should like to tell you," he writes in February, and details—in what was evidently a *compte-rendu* after a certain lapse in his correspondence—the number of Sacraments given. "You can fancy what that means for a poor curé," a rather favorite way of alluding to himself, "with no experience of work in the confessional. Very elegant, on my brother's bike, off I used to go, the bit between my teeth, through these streets of God, at the risk of my life. For the truck-drivers here are most brazen!

"Of my other work I have almost lost count, for the sick were my favorite occupation; Viaticum, Extreme Unction, baptisms and marriages simply ran riot especially in the working-classes; the most remarkable [in that Catholic country] was the baptism of two *little things* of 25 and 28 [!] who had been so foolish as to receive Communion several times before being baptized; the marriage of a couple who had lived together for twenty-five years. Many, many First Communions. . . .

"In the outlying quarters it seemed I was in my element; I talked, I shouted, I bleated, before my shirtless audience; they came in hundreds to our conferences, without fear of the police or the gendarmes. Poor lads! one can do such a lot of good amongst them."

He had even had the abjuration of a Protestant lady, a strangely home-like ceremony for us to hear of at such a time.

It is so easy to read these letters of Father Pro's. . . . There is indeed an extraordinary exhilaration, a heartening, in their reading; one smiles and is apt to forget what accompanied his laughter in the very shadow of death and far worse.

Or is it that one turns instinctively to the sunshine, simply to escape the terrible darkness across the way, in the *sótanos* (the underground cells) for instance, or the leafy garden (of death, as it has been called) at the Prefecture of Police in the very center of the city that is like Paris in its luxury, its flowered boulevards, its charming ladies? That darkness has, however, to be faced.

In the history of the persecution of the Church in Mexico it is difficult to say which class or group or sex bore away the palm of heroism. All were heroic.

The Religious Orders had their glory of martyrdom, but the Orders were on the whole less in jeopardy than the secular clergy. The Orders lived chiefly in the towns, in numbers, and in community. The isolated, and usually very poor, country priests were easier prey, and they and the secular clergy in general and the youth of Mexico bore, says a Mexican Jesuit (writing in English), "the brunt of the battle. By far the most beautiful aspect of this chapter of Church history has been the glorious heroism of our youth and our secular priests. In those really terrible moments when terror paralyzed all effort, they, lads from seventeen" (he could really have said "from ten") "to twenty-five came out, simply and firmly just to die. . . . Of the clergy I will only say this, they might have become rich and snug had they conformed in establishing the national Church Calles wanted—God only knows how much they suffered . . . at least 160 priests, 180 young men (I do not include those who have died in combat) shot with the cry of 'Long Live Christ the King!' "

Old men, *children,* and women gave their lives likewise in circumstances of dreadful horror viewed from the standpoint of earth—otherwise, in unspeakable glory.

The first executions, and those that took place in Mexico City itself, preserved a semblance of humanity. But—it has been said before in this book—the Mexicans are descended from some of the fiercest peoples of the world; they are among those who more than others need the teaching of Christ, the discipline of the Church of which many of them have been deprived. The worst elements of those thus dispossessed were in the "army." These troops were let loose to interpret the ruling of Calles in country districts.

From this welter of blood one turns not merely in soul-sickness, but in sheer physical nausea, sheer despair of being able to transcribe what can scarcely be read. . . . It seems, to human weakness, scarcely possible to write of what passed *not five years ago*, while the "vast conspiracy of silence" of the world Press prevented, to the best of its power, the world at large from knowing of the horror. It will scarcely be believed, but one of the reasons for the popular Press of the United States not "touching" the subject to any appreciable extent, was that "it would not be believed" and was in any case too horrible for its readers. . . . This in an age when horrors are the bread of life to countless popular news sheets. But the horrors must be within the limits of the decent and the possible.

In the Appendix will be found a bibliography; in the books named will be found accounts and illustrations of martyrdoms so horrible that I may be forgiven for not including them in this book. There is now religious peace in Mexico. It will be sufficient to give some idea of what preceded that peace and if it should enlist prayers for *continuance* of the peace much will have been gained.

In the week of the 1st to 8th of May, 1926, known as the "Red Week," there took place in the city of Mexico the mass execution of seventeen priests. From that prison of Santiago in whose courtyard, it will be remembered, Father Pro spent a remarkably cold night, the priests were taken to the cemetery and there lined up alongside of the trench which was to be their grave. (This was very commonly done; it saved the trouble of carting bodies to the cemetery, and the anger of the populace.) After the officer in charge had given the order and after the squad had fired, several priests still breathed. The order was then given to the soldiers to throw *all* bodies into the trench and to bury them. . . . The grave-digger—quite probably a good Catholic—lost his reason and had to be taken to the lunatic asylum of Castañeda. At Colima six ladies of noble birth were hanged to the trees of the public gardens—The Federation of Catholic Women of the United States, which has delegates in Mexico, can supply full details of this and of other deaths with torture.

A young Mexican girl who had distributed leaflets in the capital, disappeared and was finally discovered by her father in one of the prisons. She flung herself into his arms; he had to hear a horrible story of outrage. Bravely he went and asked for justice to be done. The Procurator Ortega, before whom he appeared, laughed in his face: "All women who forward clerical propaganda will be treated likewise."

Over and over again groups of Mexican Catholic women were hosed in the public streets, fired upon, and —frequently—imprisoned.

At Ciudad Victoria a group of women and young girls with great bravery demanded the release of some prisoners for the Faith. The soldiery had the decency to fire first in the air to frighten them. As they continued to advance, the men (doubtless obeying orders) fired at the women who, resolute in the holiness of their cause, fired back and actually put the soldiers to flight (probably not a great number) and delivered the prisoners. A regiment was then sent to deal with the little town, and Guadalupe Chairez, the young girl who had organized the deliverance of the Catholic prisoners, was arrested. She was requested to cry "Long live Calles," and refused.

"Where are the priests of this parish?" She kept silence.

"The whip will soon make you speak."

She was flogged and still refused to speak. She was attached to a stake, her fingers were one after the other *torn* off, then her arms were cut off in pieces. While this was being done and till she died she called the rallying cry of the martyrs—"Viva Cristo Rey"—"Hail Christ the King."

At Guadalajara a Catholic mother encouraged her boy of twelve during his martyrdom. . . . He had distributed leaflets. He was tortured for the name of the giver of the leaflets. His mother kept repeating: "Say nothing, my child—Our Lord will give thee heaven for thy constancy." They broke both his arms and he died.

Each glorious martyrdom has its story, glorious in spite of the shrinking with which one may read of it. And although this book is not the history of the religious persecution in Mexico, but an attempt to make known to English-speaking readers, in a necessarily abridged and fragmentary way, the life and death of one only of the martyrs, yet these deaths and tortures were known to him, were what he faced for days and months as most likely to happen to himself—they have, therefore, inevitably their place here.

The martyrdom of the old priests has from the human point of view an inexpressibly touching appeal.

A certain Señor Alvarez—to whom be all honor—

brother of the Chief of Staff of Calles, himself gave to a Guadalajara journal, with much indignation, the story of a crime committed at Purificacion, July, 1926. A Captain Goméz arrested a priest eighty years of age, a gentle old priest loved by the poor, rather simple, and completely deaf. He was accused of conspiracy . . . and, as he could not hear a word of the accusation, was shot dead.

An elderly parish priest, Father Francisco Vera, discovered saying Mass, was then and there set against a wall and shot dead in the poor vestments he wore and his priest's biretta. In the photograph—it was the habit, so as to intimidate other priests and Catholics, to photograph those about to die—he stands quite gently, yet upright, against the whitewashed wall, probably of his own house, his hands meekly joined, his quiet eyes on the firing squad.

Occasionally there is a record of humanity on the part of soldier or officer. At Nochistlán, the parish priest, Father Ramon Adame, was arrested and taken to Yahualica. As he could walk only with difficulty, an officer moved by pity offered him his horse.

"No," the priest answered gently, "Christ ascended Calvary on foot."

"But I cannot shoot an innocent man."

"My poor friend, you will only expose your own life if you do not."

The officer refused to order the execution and was himself shot with the priest.

The Holy Father himself, in his encyclical on the Mexican persecution, alluded to the heroic death of the first martyrs, Manuel Melgarejo, aged seventeen, and Joaquin Silva, aged twenty-seven.

They were, from the worldling's point of view, simple, entirely negligible youths, yet—speaking with due reserve—their names will in all probability be raised to the altars of the Church, will be added to those of the glorious company of martyrs.

These two Leaguers had met in a train the "General" Zepeda who easily enough deceived them by pretending to be of the Catholic party; he got them to talk freely and then had them arrested. Silva, the elder, at once asked that Melgarejo should be set free as he (Silva) was alone responsible. Melgarejo, however, refused firmly to leave his friend.

On the way to the Pantheon Cemetery, Melgarejo (aged seventeen) was offered his life if he would cry "Long live Calles!" He called instead "Long live Christ the King!"

They tried to take Silva's rosary from him and he resisted energetically. "And do not bandage my eyes: I am not a criminal. Fire when I give the signal of 'Long live Christ the King and Our Lady of Guadalupe!' "

A soldier threw down his rifle and refused to fire. "I think as you do, Señor, I am a Catholic." He was shot next day.

Perhaps the most outstanding figure of the magnificent band of Catholic youth who died for their faith, was that of Anacleto Gonsalez Flores, member of the Leagues, and President of the "People's Union" of the State of Jalisco, the organizer of many study circles and the promoter of the Catholic Workers' Federation at the National Congress of Working Men at Guadalajara, capital of Jalisco.

Flores was of very humble origin and had, by dint of unremitting work and energy, got himself admitted to the bar, having had both to study and to earn his living at one and the same time. He had achieved, for a poor man's son, a wonderful position. "He was," writes the Mexican Jesuit before quoted, "won over to the Catholic cause by one of our Fathers. He was a born orator; handsome, fearless, sincere." This boy—he was twenty-three—was, like many of his friends and companions, an intrepid organizer of the boycott and of the pacific (not the armed) protests of the Jalisco Catholics. He was already married and had two tiny children.

On April 1, 1927, the police surrounded his house at Guadalajara. He was taken with three of his friends, and addressed the police: "Arrest me, but let these young men go." All four, and a young Luis Padilla, were taken to the Red Barracks, that latter-day Coliseum. They were left for some hours without food. Then for *hours on end* Flores, was hung up by his thumbs—in some accounts three hours is mentioned; in some, six. The truth seems to be that his martyrdom lasted six hours in all but that the hanging by the thumbs alternated with floggings. The object of the torture was to make him reveal the hiding-place of the Archbishop.

This he steadfastly refused to do, while encouraging his companions who were shot before his eyes. By the end of the hanging, Flores' flesh was literally ploughed with bayonet wounds, his teeth were broken, he was a mere bleeding wreck yet he still breathed. The soldiers finished him off in front of his young wife who had arrived on the scene of torture.

His body was taken to the cemetery by workmen, three of whom spoke in praise of the martyr at his graveside. They were arrested at the cemetery gates; one made his escape, two were shot.

To estimate the actual number of martyrs is not yet possible. The author of "Le Mexique Martyr," A. P. Bessières, estimated the number of members of the

League of Youth who had given up their lives by the month of April, 1928, at two hundred.

The reaction of the world to the martyrdoms is, as far as Governments are concerned, easy to estimate: it was all but nil. The single *Government* which, to its everlasting honor, officially protested was that of Peru. On August 3, 1926, the President, Dr. Augustín Leguía, wrote himself to President Calles begging His Excellency in the name of Latin-American brotherhood to put an end to the "anguish" of the times.

The answer of Calles was insolent—he took the letter of the President of Peru, he said, as a personal one and not as "an interference in the internal affairs of my country"—Dr. Leguía was, too, "obviously *misled by the calumnies of the clergy* of Mexico." (*Le Mexique Martyr*, p. 105.)

Of the other powers, Great Britain was in no position to intervene in the affairs of a country whose Government was backed by that of the United States or whose mineral riches were so largely owned by subjects of the United States. The *mot d'ordre*, it seems too evident, had been given to the English Press: silence on the subject of religious differences (sic!) in Mexico.

From that attitude nothing could make the secular Press of Great Britain depart. There was one exception as Catholics know and should remember: the "Daily Express" sent out a representative to Mexico.

The Catholic Press did what it could, though it is obvious that it has not the monetary resources of the big dailies.

The "Universe," notably, was untiring in its efforts to pierce the apathy of too many Catholics in Great Britain. It was indeed not only apathy: there appeared to be something in the enormity of the sufferings of the heroic which produced a reaction. "It must be exaggerated," was an attitude which dispensed with the necessity for even thinking about the matter—let alone trying to *do* anything about it.

The bishops of Mexico addressed the world in most moving terms. "Mexico is dying," wrote one of them. And the priesthood of Mexico did, in a certain sense, die; that is, it was martyred in battalions. Yet there were not wanting the comments of some of us, living mild lives of easy piety—"Ah! yes, very dreadful! . . . But was not the Church in Mexico *terribly* rich? the clergy dreadfully corrupt?"

To say that an undue love of riches is a temptation from which highly-placed churchmen have not been immune is a truism. But an elementary study of Church history in Mexico shows that history as magnificent in the benefactions of its clergy to the poor, in the proper application of the wealth which the devotion of their people undoubtedly *did* heap upon their shrines, churches and residences. That a recent very popular novel describes as typical what are rare cases of avarice and tyranny of isolated priests, does not alter facts. In the wild north and the far south, lost in the tropics and removed from contact with their bishops, there may be certain cases of disedification—so other Mexican priests will own.

Individual Catholics of many countries will be remembered with gratitude by the Catholics of Mexico. Those of Germany, Spain, Belgium, France, Scotland and Ireland, of Peru, the Argentine, Uruguay, Colombia, Brazil and Canada, who demonstrated and endeavored to force their Governments to some gesture of protest. Italy founded the International Union for the Defense of Mexico, whose headquarters were in Rome.

On at least two definite occasions a section of English Catholics protested firmly and splendidly. The annual Catholic Congress, at Manchester, in September, 1926, despatched a message of protest to President Calles and one of admiration to the Mexican episcopate. In March, 1927, a Pro-Mexican mass-meeting sent requests for intervention to the British and American Governments in the name of humanity. Mr. George Barnard published "The Mexican Reformation," a well-documented account of the persecution.

Scotland likewise had its pro-Mexican meeting "of protestation," at Edinburgh. At its close a member of the audience rose and addressed Monsignor Graham: "I am a Protestant and a Freemason, but I can testify to the truth of all that has been said by the speaker" (a Mr. Donovan who had illustrated his statements with lantern slides) "I love the Mexican people and I feel for it the most profound pity."

In April, 1928, the English Bishops addressed a joint letter to those of Mexico, voicing their solidarity.

But *on the whole* the Catholics of Europe did too little for their persecuted fellow-Catholics. The generosity of the few stands out in all the greater contrast:—members of the International Catholic Youth of Germany, the Jeunesse Catholique of Belgium whose members were untiring in their organized efforts; the members of the National Catholic Federation of France; Father Rutten, a Dominican, who brought forward in the Belgian Senate the cause of Mexico amidst plaudits, including those of anti-clericals and Socialists; the Hungarian Minister Haller who asked most pertinently "Where was the League of Nations," the supposed protector of the oppressed? Count Albert Apponyi who in Hungary stigmatized as cowardly the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries. "What," he asked, "if a country re-established slavery? There is a solidarity of the conscience of mankind and a Sovereign State does not escape its verdict."

In Spain, as might be expected, much was done for Mexico; the newspaper "El Debate" of Madrid raised its voice to demand the liberty (refused to the Press by Primo di Rivera) of castigating the "illegal barbarity" of Calles. The International Union for the Defense of Mexico in Italy, was extremely active in spite of the pronounced opposition of Mussolini to any form of propaganda for the martyred country.

But no great wave of indignation among Catholics forced the hand of any Government. The fact was, obviously, that no Government felt itself in a position to intervene. Great Britain had had to submit to the expulsion of her diplomatic representative in Mexico, Mr. H. A. C. Cummins on June 20, 1924. So that with whatever eyes the British Government may have viewed Calles it was scarcely in its power to air those views, especially as there was no intensive pressure from British Catholics.

The Catholics of the United States of America, while giving to the rest of the world an example of magnificent and generous energy, most certainly helped to end the persecution.

They stand alone. Alone in their untiring zeal, generosity and efficiency. They were beyond praise once the true state of affairs in Mexico was known to them, had broken through the Conspiracy of Silence of the General Press.

This was effected by the splendid efforts of the Catholic Press, of the episcopate and many of the clergy, secular and regular.

The Knights of Columbus were magnificent, as were the two million members of the Holy Name Society. The splendid National Catholic Welfare Conference, whose Chairman, Archbishop Hanna of San Francisco, earned the undying gratitude of Mexico; the Catholics of New York who founded the Society for the Defense of Religious Rights in Mexico; Archbishop Curley of Baltimore, who was unflagging in his efforts, nobly seconded by Bishop Kelley of Oklahoma and other members of the hierarchy.

Not less outspoken were individual writers like Father Kenny, S.J.; William Montavon; Mr. Michael Williams, the editor, and Mr. George Shuster of the "Commonweal," a periodical which was always to the fore. The Jesuit weekly, "America," under the leadership of its late editor, Father Tierney, S.J., and its present editor, Father Parsons, S.J., carried on a most energetic campaign for informing Americans of the true nature of Mexican affairs.

The weekly "Baltimore Catholic Review" organized a magnificent campaign of public speaking, lectures, press articles and propaganda of all sorts; it even engineered, with the help of the episcopate, a general public novena to the Patroness of Mexico, Our Lady of Guadalupe. It organized also a special press-service to counteract the calumnies of Calles and the Mexican government generally, and to force the "truth about Mexico" into the United States.

A formal letter concerning the persecution was sent to the President of the United States by the Administrative Committee of the National Catholic Welfare Conference.

It is not possible, at present, to know exactly what part the United States Government had in bringing about the "Peace" of May, 1929, under President Portes Gil. Mr. Dwight W. Morrow, the American Ambassador to Mexico since 1927, is believed to have personally contributed by his efforts to the happier state of affairs now prevailing.

CHAPTER XIII

THE spring and summer of 1927 were spent by Father Pro in the same dangers and activities. He had still no time in which to think of his health; only very occasionally is it mentioned by him, in answer to some question of a correspondent.

In August he alludes to a period of "relative [religious] peace. We are getting in the harvest—of souls. But always the same difficulty: the day has only twenty-four hours. . . . Consultations, like those of Nicodemus, with armed guards at the door; very moving First Communions; Masses in the style of the Catacombs, in which one feels so small in face of the faith of the congregation; confessions by day and night which exhaust the 'old man' and make him detest sin (because of what it costs him!). If I had community life the burden would be less by ninety per cent., but, as it is, I go here and there, sweating and trailed about in lorries without springs, furtively spying at spies, and at every corner the sword of Damocles threatening us with arrest and underground cells. . . . Ah! I would almost rather be in prison to rest a little. I am broken, more and more broken, by all this barbarity. Poor people! poor people!"

It was seldom indeed that even to his Superiors he allowed that he was "broken." For after they had enforced his inactivity for a time (after the balloons) he had written that he was "stifled" in his hiding-place, hearing from those who visited him lamentations on the imprisonment of one, the murder of another, "and I was caged up! I could not study, I had no books. And I burned to be under fire again, to give new vigor to the fighters and, in my heart, the hope that I should share their lot."

Undoubtedly he desired martyrdom—"to be with Christ." But he wanted, too, to fight for Christ till the last moment.

It will have been gathered that if barbarianism reigned in his native land, there reigned, too, a lack of formality which had its good as well as bad points—he was able to visit the prisons, even to get round the warders. On one occasion he *got out* of prison by enlisting the pity of a particular warder by showing him the still almost fresh marks of his three operations! It would have taken Father Pro to think of such an appeal!

On one occasion he was to say his Mass-at-dawn in a certain house in a district of Mexico City. On arriving he found two gendarmes at the door.

" 'This time I am in the soup,' I said to myself. To go in was a big risk. But *not to*, was to give way to fear; to abandon to their fate the faithful who were expecting me was, to my mind, shameful.

"I pulled myself together and went straight up to the gendarmes. With an important air I took down in a note-book the number of the house. Then I opened my coat as if showing them my Secret Police badge and said with an air of conviction:

" 'Something fishy going on here. . . .'

"They gave me a military salute and let me pass, convinced that I was a Secret Police agent and that I had really shown them the badge they wear.

"I ran upstairs saying to myself: 'Now there *is* something fishy going on here.' Impossible, however, to say Mass. The poor congregation, seeing me come in, was white with terror. They wanted to hide me behind a wardrobe.

"I said, 'We could not be safer: the gendarmes are outside guarding us!' But I could not convince them. They wanted me to make my escape by the roof. I put away my soutane and went out as I had come in, not without receiving from the gendarmes two magnificent military salutes."

There is quite an Edgar Wallace atmosphere about many of his escapes. He writes of another:

"It was the first evening of the retreat I gave to Government employees. I had left them about 9:30. After my somewhat noisy eloquence I was as red as a tomato.

"I noticed two individuals staring at me; they were waiting for me at the street corner. I understood at once they were spies. I said to myself: 'This time, my boy, say good-bye to your skin.' But I remembered the old saw—'He gives twice who gives first.' I went up to them and asked for a match.

" 'You can get them at a shop,' they answered.

"I went off; they followed me. Was it pure coincidence? I turn in one direction, then in another; they do what I do. 'My Aunt!' I said to myself, 'if I only had my bicycle! Something is certainly going to happen this time.' I took a taxi; so did they. My driver, happily, was a Catholic. Seeing in what straits I was, he put himself at my disposal.

" 'Listen, my son,' I said to him. 'When you come to a street corner, slow down; I will jump out. You go on as if you had not noticed.'

"I put my cap in my pocket, undid my black waistcoat displaying a white shirt instead, and jumped.

"A few swift steps took me to a tree against which I leant so that no one could fail to see me. A second later the two of them passed, so close that they scratched me with their mudguard. They certainly saw me but it did not enter their minds I was the one they were after.

"I made a half-turn. I was not in the state I should have wished. . . . I was beginning to feel the effects of the shock I had given myself, in jumping.

" 'Buck up, my boy,' I said, and made off."

Two "*técnicos*" shadowed him on another occasion: he could feel them close behind him. On turning a street corner he perceived a Catholic lady he knew. With a wink he "put her wise," took her arm and they sauntered off arm in arm. Ten seconds after, the police came into the street—there was certainly no priest to be seen, only a strolling couple of lovers!

Again, two agents arrived at the house. This time they thought they had caught something—a big fish! Father Pro met them with so much aplomb, such terrific cordiality, and made them laugh so much, that they were convinced they had come on a false scent. To settle the matter he took them off to a café, stood them refreshments, and drank, himself, to their good luck. . . .

It was his obvious duty, and one cannot help seeing that it was his pleasure to slip thus dexterously through the fingers of police agents and spies. But just a year before his death he "had promised the saddest saints of Heaven to dance a *jarabe tapatío*" (a species of

Mexican break-down) "if the warrant out against him succeeded in reaching him."

And, though he evaded arrest, he did not even yet hide himself. Incidentally, he was indefatigable in helping on propaganda. One of the countless means adopted was that of small "stick-on" advertisements that were pasted everywhere, even on to Calles' own motor-car. . . .

Father Pro thought of an even more ingenious way of displaying them. Seated in a street-car he managed—unseen—to stick a series on to his own back. Then getting up he walked very slowly and gravely the length of the car like some "softy," victim of a practical joke.

On May 25 he wrote that the Government was particularly enraged by the Bonds put about by the Leagues. These Bonds had "stimulated public charity." The money they realized was "to serve for . . . many things," and as the issue had already had a splendid success members of the Government were "giving themselves to all the devils. They will certainly hang me if this innocent letter falls into their hands."

Arrests were growing still more frequent.

"Things," he wrote, "are going swimmingly: that is, Christians are being sent to heaven for a yes or a no. The happy man who gets into the *sótanos* is pretty certain to eat no more bread at his own table. With us this persuasion is so deep-rooted that the whole of my tender circle of relations, when one of us crosses the threshold to go out, instead of saying 'Au revoir' makes an act of contrition,

"We do know that he who is not in by eleven o'clock at night will surely serve as a target for the bullets of our dignitaries. We have already held our family councils—we said good-bye till the Valley of Josaphat.

"We have made no wills: the two mattresses and the chicken-house which remained to us have already been taken. But in the midst of tears, bursts of laughter are heard, for it is a windfall to be able to get to the heavenly courts for so noble a cause."

One can only suppose that the police who came to try to arrest someone, when they failed in the attempt, must have removed furniture instead. There was certainly a shortage of necessities which must have had its inconveniences! This did not—as usual—prevent his pressing his friends to come and visit him.

"What would I not give for you to come and spend a day with us. We live in a house, without any visitors, and only what is essentially essential for life. We are seven: there are five chairs, four plates, four knives, eight beds, three mattresses and a broom. . . . It is all lent to us, that is—given; for it is nearly certain that neither we nor our heirs will return anything.

"Of late I have broken no lances with the police. Except once, quite recently, a reservist who swore to me by the fifteen peers of France that I should go to prison, while I *almost* swore by the beard of the prophet that I should not.

"He was so annoying that I was almost inclined to box his ears. I ended by saying to him: 'Look here, annoying creature, if you take me to prison I shall not be able to hear your poor mother's confession.'

" 'Oh, Father, I beg your pardon! You see in what times we live! Go! go away from here this instant.'

" 'Go? It is you who are going and without even stopping to search the premises. Go and tell your mother that I will come and hear her confession to-night and bring her Communion to-morrow. We shall see if by these means we shall get *you* to confession.'

"Next day my friend assisted at his mother's Communion; I think I shall take it to him too . . ." (Vigil of the Ascension.)

One special activity of Father Pro's, not so far mentioned, was his care for the poor, and a regularly organized plan of campaign, for helping them, which he had started in the February of 1927. Poverty in Mexico had not diminished; unemployment and every social ill had naturally accompanied the disastrous mismanagement by Calles. There were also the families of the poorer young Catholics who now, at long last, had taken up arms and were fighting in Jalisco against terrible odds.

For all these Father Pro had to find food, rent and clothes. He did so and even in the doing of it managed to have adventures and to be amusing about it. Having been away so long, he said, he knew few people, but he found no difficulty in getting houses lent to him—sometimes with a receipt for a year or so's rent. He had a sort of grocer's shop of provisions and his sacks, he said, filled themselves as if by magic.

"So as not to be idle I make, *sotto voce*, my provisions. . . . So far I have eighteen families provisioned for two months [he wrote to his Provincial on February 19]. I do not know how, or when or from whom, but one day I get fifty kilos of sugar, another time boxes of biscuits, chocolate, rice and even wine. And the Providence of God is so fatherly that when I am still scratching my head and asking myself whom I shall go and beg from, I find that the room that serves as a depot is, against all expectation, well filled up.

"May Jesus be praised! I have not time to breathe, I am in work up to the neck, giving food to the hungry—and they are many. I go off like a water-spout and with a light foot (the privilege usually of pickpockets), so much so that I do not worry when I get a message like this: the family say they have nothing in the larder; there are twelve of them; their underclothes are in bits; three of them are in bed. In general my purse is as flat as the spiritual part of Calles, but that is not worth a thought, because the Overseer of Heaven is so magnificent! Here is an example:

" 'Señor Barretero [Miner], here are a hundred piasters I have been given for you.'

" 'Keep them—for the moment there is nothing pressing.'

"And please believe this is *history*. Two streets further I have to write an urgent card: 'Of those hundred piasters please send forty to so and so, forty to someone else and twenty to another.'

"People give me valuable objects to raffle: things worth ten piasters bring in forty.

"One day I was bearing off a bag—a lady's—extremely pretty (I mean the bag, not the lady!). It had been given to me five minutes before and behold I run into a much-painted lady—*ut in pluribus.*

" 'What have you there?' she asks.

" 'A lady's reticule worth twenty-five piasters; but if it is for you I will let you have it for—fifty. . . .

Please send the money to the X family. . . .' Such an insinuation [he adds], no one could resist."

In the last few months of his life Father Pro found a lodging in the house of a charitable lady, Señora J. Montes de Oca. She was imprisoned at the same time as her guest and after his death was exiled to the United States. She gives details of his campaign for his constantly increasing poor.

"He came home on one occasion but there was really nothing to offer him; the Government's people constantly search the house and remove things. He accepted the few biscuits I could give him and went out again laughing, 'They are not enough for me, it is not worth my starting to eat them.' And he took them to some sick people."

He wrote to one of his cousins:

"Given the times we are passing through, one can scarcely describe the poverty which reigns in this country. We are now at the twenty-sixth family we have to support from A to Z." By the time of his death this number was more than trebled.

"All my staff consists of half a dozen pious women and half a dozen pious men without occupation. In public I call the pious women 'The Section of Investigation and Supply,' amongst ourselves: 'The Beggars on the Make.' . . . The men I call in public 'The Directing Committee,' amongst ourselves: 'The Supply Blackmailers,' for they lose no chance of begging from the most casual passer-by for the support of this Royal Family of God who live on blackmail.

"In several districts of the capital there are special Help Commissions; when we have anything over we give it to them, for our maxim is not to be miserly with God's purse, not to lack faith by keeping stores from one month to another. If that is folly from the economic standpoint, my answer is that then it is folly to take on whole families to support.

"The least numerous of the latter have from four to six members, the others ten or twelve; they have the bad habit of wanting food three times a day and generally with a good appetite. If it was only that, that would be 'song and fancy-work,' but they are real children of Adam and Eve, they live under a roof which has to be paid for, they wear boots which wear out and linen which gets embellished with holes; they even know how to get ill and want something to make them better.

"It is clear that there is not and could not be money for all that, but I take advantage of being friends with doctors who give their services, and millionaires who lend houses with receipts for rent signed and even stamped. I am only sorry I have no friends among tailors and shoemakers—if I had I need not break my head with calculations like this: six pairs of boots at 12 piasters: 72 piasters and I only have 20.

" 'Therefore,' as my professor of moral theology used to say, 'Now you unravel that!' "

He might often be seen in the streets of Mexico City with large sacks of provisions on his back. . . . It was a matter of complete indifference to him if the wags he encountered should laugh at him—he would have laughed louder. On one famous occasion he bore through the streets six chickens and a turkey—all of them alive! Another time he got into a bus with six chickens . . . and got away with it, as he would have said—he was so genuinely funny he could literally do anything.

Perhaps what *cost* him the most in ignoring self-love (and that "chic" appearance in mufti to which he alluded so engagingly and with his charming boyishness) was when on more than one occasion he had to deal with babies abandoned in the purlieus of the city and to take them himself to some crêche.

Here again he manages to laugh at himself—as well as at anything that could, in those tragic days, be laughed at: "I have had six [babies] given to me. The first time it happened I had no time to send for anyone to fetch the baby, I had to take it away myself. I was imprudent enough to put it, well wrapped up in a big shawl, in a corner of the car. At the first bump the baby gave a leap and if I had not caught it on the wing, I should have had nothing left to do but to take it to the cemetery. I took it into my arms; and I need not tell you in what a state I was when I handed it over to its adopted parents!"

But however light he may have made of it to his absent Superior, his whole "campaign" was carried on at cost to himself.

"To tell the whole truth," he wrote to a young cousin (August 5, 1927) three months before his death, "though cereals are abundant this is due to my crimson face. Because you cannot imagine the shame there is in begging, always begging. . . . Happily that He for Whom one does it is not parsimonious. May He be ever blessed!"

This work he carried on, with his more directly spiritual work, by night and day.

Who can say how many he consoled in those terrible times, what burdens he bore, how much of himself he did not give in help and encouragement, besides the material help to the hundred-odd families he in the end *supported.*

He got to bed now at any, or no, time. His poor came to see him at night, and his young men.

He showed, or at any rate seems to have felt, a great preference for men. He was more himself with them. "Whether they are of the highest rank, of the middle or lower classes, I am at home with them," he wrote. "My only regret being that I cannot give them all the time I should like. A splendid gang of taxi drivers is my glory! Splendid to be with these lads who *shout* and whom nothing will stop, but who are so good when they find one is interested in and concerned for them."

All souls were naturally of equal value in his eyes, but *his* mission he seems to have felt was not so much to women. He even occasionally, as is not surprising in such a jester, pokes a little harmless fun at the "unco good" among them—as at himself. "*Dévotes* adore me," he had written November 13, 1926, and continued: "drunkards call me 'thou,' street-vendors wink at me, the flower and cream of ruffians consider me their heart's friend."

He had an essential virility; a broad vision, the very reverse of finicking: it does not seem as if he could have *understood* anything small or mean. He preferred what was rather rough and plain in humanity to what was over-refined or, above all, sophisticated. His charity "covered" the rich, but he was very far from having a natural leaning towards them; I do not think he felt so far really friendly towards them as to laugh at them. . . . His ideal, one seems again to see, was that a man should own little and that made "by the sweat of his brow," that he should be hampered by scarcely any possessions and owe nothing except to his own right hand and above all, of course, to God.

His love for others was selfless. He set aside, Father Dragon says, "any signs of affection shown him." "I am ready to give my life for souls, but I want nothing from anyone for myself. All that I want is to lead them to God. If I kept anything for myself I should be a thief, infamous; I should no longer be a priest."

Yet he had the tenderest heart. And he was a poet. It can be imagined that he had not much time to indulge in verse-writing, yet he has left a few poems. Of one of these "To my Souls," a compatriot, himself at one time a professor of Latin-American Literature, writes: "In spite of the defective structure of some verses, the fragment is extremely beautiful. There is in it an infinite tenderness for human suffering, a bold, free, rhythmical expression of thought and sentiment."

Appended is a translation by Father Dragon, S.J. The poem seems to lend itself better to translation in a Latin than in an Anglo-Saxon language.

À MES ÂMES!

C'est pour vous, que sont mes chants,
Mes chants forgés sur l'enclume de la douleur . . .
Pour vous; vous tous qui n'avez plus de drapeau
Ni de toit ni d'amour!

Ah! mes âmes; que tuent ces nostalgies ignorées,
Qui vivent dans l'ennui, sans soulagement dans
leurs souffrances,
Qui connaissent les nuits noires, éternelles et sombres
Comme les ombres des enfers! De ces âmes, mes
sœurs,
Je partage les souffrances.

Mes âmes sont des hirondelles qui ne cherchent
pas l'été

Et qui voyagent de par le monde, sans drapeau,
sans amour;
De ces âmes qui souffrent un martyre quotidien,
De ces âmes qui vont, tristes, seules, errantes, je
suis le frère,
Parce qu'elles vivent de douleur.

Oh! mes âmes, ce sont des âmes fortes, qui dans la
lutte de la vie
N'ont jamais vu se realiser leur rêve d'idéal
Et qui vont, avec leurs regrets, le front relevé,
Cachant sous un sourire les douleurs d'une blessure
Qui rend leur mal infini.

Oh! mes âmes, ce sont des âmes de géants qui
parcourent leur sentier
Sans éprouver le doux nectar que l'on trouve dans
l'amour,
Parce que jamais le monde ne leur a donné un
ami véritable
Pour apprécier les trésors de la très riche mine
Que fait naître la douleur dans les
âmes.

Ce sont des hirondelles sans abri qui ne cherchent
pas l'été
Et qui voyagent de par le monde en défiant le vent;
De ces orphelines tristes, errantes, je suis le frère;
Le frère de celles qui sous les larmes secrètes
sacrifient toujours en vain
Leurs rêves d'idéal.

Ne cherchez pas ici sur la terre les sources caduques
De cet amour que, pauvres âmes, dans vos désirs
enflammés, vous recherchez;
Car la soif de vos âmes, seuls la rassasient les
torrents

De tendresse infinie, et d'amour céleste
Que Dieu réserve pour le ciel!

These verses bear out the assertion that his gaiety was not a fundamental quality. Yet it seems as if that laughter of his may be—apart from his martyrdom—that by which he is best remembered, for which, in this sad world, he may be most loved.

Gaiety was frequently a characteristic of the saints but "Miguelito" appeared to have the happy gift *in excelsis*; he made it infectious, radiated joy.

He must, one thinks, have been given by "God his Father" (*Dios mi Padre*) as a special present to our generation, a generation reproached with being pleasure-mad.

Here was one who died for God and who had first lived for Him. Yet he, too, had loved music and laughter and the joy of life. Only he had loved God too and first of all.

He made holiness attractive, made it seem easy. . . . showed that it is compatible with joy, that it may comprise laughter. Surely God gave him to his day for a guide, for a sign.

He was, when he came to die, or so he would have thought, unfinished; he would have expected to develop, to widen out. Yet, as he was to die, one can not help rejoicing that it was before his happy laughter;—that *might* have perished with a soberer age.

The Laughing Saint . . . so he may come to be called.

He had, we know, little spare time for his own soul during his apostolate in Mexico. But his love for God—as far as one can, in reverence venture to judge—grew greater as the days passed. And he *did* find time for prayer as one might have expected.

He had an intense devotion to the Heart of Our Lord and was not one of those who see in this devotion, revealed to us by Our Lord Himself, something a little petty. It exactly suited his strong manhood.

To one of his collaborators to whom he could speak intimately he said: "In the open heart of Jesus Christ one sees His heart burning with love for you, for me, for all men. . . . But one sees it surrounded with thorns and in their center the Cross. This fire of love must light up our poor hearts, too, so that it can communicate itself to others, but surrounded with thorns to keep us on our guard against petty self-interests—surmounted by a wide-armed cross to embrace *all* who surround us and not let us limit our zeal to any particular person."

"Do you know," he said another time, "where I got the little experience I have? where I learnt to love? It was in the Heart of Jesus."

In Mexico, as in Europe, people were surprised at the ease and simplicity with which he talked of the supernatural. It was the simple fact to him so he often mentioned it to his confrères:—"I would give my life to bring souls to God." That was his idea of the priesthood; he would have been profoundly unhappy and out of place in a comfortable "soft job." "But to do any good to souls one must love them with passion," he often added reflectively.

He had an infinite respect for souls, says Father Dragon, for "this heart's friend of scoundrels" knew, besides, many chosen souls, those who usually are the most tried. He had with them the delicacy of a mother with her child. "A director with psychological insight," he never imposed a uniform rule, still less his own will. "He studied every soul individually"—how he had time to do so, who can explain?—and "without doing it violence would stimulate the work of grace in a soul." "God alone," he said, "God alone is the master of souls."

He would get home sometimes, "broken" as he had said, with fatigue, after long hours of confessions and, remembering some soul in trouble, would *kneel* to offer for it the Office he had still to say and that he could have read in an easier position.

So the summer of 1927 wore away. There seemed to be a pause in the activities of the Prefecture; probably it was tired of trying to lay hands on the priest Miguel Augustin Pro who merely slipped, laughing, through all the agents' hands and those of the ten thousand spies. So he himself thought. He was getting less interesting to them, something of a bore, perhaps; they "were not going to try" any more.

I do not know if it was to this time, or earlier, that we owe a snapshot of him taken actually *at* Chapultepec, the President's residence just outside Mexico City. . . . Father Pro is in a lounge suit and the straw "boater" in which he used to arrive to give his ladies' and other retreats; one hand is in his pocket, the other holds a long cigarette-holder. His attitude is one of complete and uninterested ease, his face all puckered up by the terrific sunshine while his brother "snaps" him. In the immediate background and almost next to him is one of Calles' Yaqui soldier-guards, and a few yards off is Calles' home and a balcony with windows through which one can all but see through into the rooms. . . .

His time, however, was getting short. Precisely when he was beginning, as he would half laughingly, half indignantly say, to believe that they never would do their job and catch him, he got "caught."

At the end of October he went out to a place called Toluca, fifty miles from Mexico City, and gave a mission which was extremely successful, but which had the narrowest escape of being surprised. The police there did not know "M. A. Pro" but they suspected *something* was up. He returned, however, in safety to the capital.

There is one more letter of his. On October 30, the Feast of Christ the King came round again. It was, one is glad to think, gloriously successful from the point of view of the priest who worked so valiantly to make it so. He gave a triduum on the preceding days.

He opened the door, he says, (presumably of Señora Montes de Oca's house where he still lodged—from late at night, that is, till dawn) to a congregation of about one hundred fifty. In the evening to at least two hundred men. He could not imagine, he says, how they all got into three not very big (and badly-lit) rooms. They came, he said, "starving for the Word of God. I was in admiration of so many coming in spite of all the spies not two steps away. That is exactly why, I suppose, the authorities could not believe there could be such a cool hand as myself to give a triduum with rosary and mission hymns exactly as in normal times.

"As for me, I had posed myself a syllogism *in barbara* to settle my scruples. Either they will throw me into prison during the triduum, or they will not. If they do not, I continue to give it and so to honor Christ the King.

"If they *do*, I shall continue to give the triduum by my prayers and penances (I allude to the prison insects). Therefore, the triduum took place. . . .

"Under the pompous title of Conferences I 'went from Herod to Pilate,' beginning with three resounding phrases followed by a mere common sermon on Judgment, Death, Sin, and Confession."

The congregation was composed largely of workmen, some of them were simple souls who had been taught subversive politics by Communists and others.

"After one conference," their preacher tells us, "three shoemakers left, saying that all that 'fitted their feet to perfection.' That is to say it just about suited them. These eminent critics owned that this sort of conference 'was a great lift-up for the constituent mentality of the nation'! I did not quite grasp their meaning but I grasped their hands with such fervor that mine smelt of cobbler's wax for three hours!"

Strangely enough, as the subject had seemed to have disappeared from his horizon, he ends his letter with an allusion to his health—possibly in answer to some question or reprimand. "I need not tell you I forget all the medical prescriptions that were, after my operation, to weigh for three years like curses on my human nature. Meat is supposed to be a mortal sin for me, well, I have eaten small sausages and *pambosas* and they have not protested in my stomach,—so that . . . the excursions which give prestige to the constituent mentality of the nation may be multiplied without fear of men or things. . . . What do you think? Ah, little Cousin! use all your influence so that they may lengthen my lead and I may be able to go more freely about God's world. Remember that nothing less is in jeopardy than the constituent mentality of the nation."

They are, I think, the last words of any letter of his and, characteristically, they are a jest. He was enchanted with this *bon mot* of his three honest shoemakers. . . .

CHAPTER XIV

WE HAVE come to the month that was to see the martyrdom of Father Pro and his younger brother Humberto.

On a morning of that month Father Pro had said Mass at a convent. He was talking to the Superior a little later. "I have offered my life for the saving of Mexico," he said to her, "and this morning at Mass I felt it had been accepted."

On November 15, as General Obregón was driving through the public park-like avenues that surround the official residence of President Calles, to a bull fight at the Plaza de Toros, two bombs were thrown at him. Obregón escaped with a slight scratch.

Alvaro Obregón, like Calles, whose best friend he ostensibly was, had come from the wild North, from Sonora on the borders of Arizona.

There he had risen by the same sort of means as other revolutionary generals. He had undertaken to join in a revolt—against Porfirio Diaz—and had immediately gone over to the other side! In Madero's revolution he had achieved success as a soldier of fortune, had created Calles a general, left him to govern the police of Sonora and had himself marched south against Carranza.

Eventually he had seized the presidency and, out of office in that month of November 1927, was again in the running for it.

After the attempted assassination, Obregón, who was not the sort of person to be prostrated by the reports of a bomb or two, drove on to the Plaza de Toros. The windows of his fine car were broken and the glass had cut its owner very slightly. His friends, General Otero and Colonel Martínez, had pursued the bombing Essex car while Obregón continued on his way. At the President's box at the bull-ring he found Calles who congratulated him warmly on his escape.

Obregón, however, was pensive. It is quite one thing to have a disregard for the lives of other people and another to disregard one's own.

On the next day the "Excelsior" newspaper reporter was received by General Obregón at his beautiful home. Obregón was still thoughtful. He did *not* think the dastardly attempt was due to the Catholics.

Reporter: "Where, Excellency, do you think the idea of the attempt originated?" *Obregón:* "Any judgment of mine would be a hazard, but I venture to believe that in this instance there is question of a political plot."

This was published by the "Excelsior" on the same day, November 14, 1927.

When the two officers, friends of Obregón, had got level with the Essex car, they fired—being, of course, fully armed—at the four assailants who immediately abandoned the car and tried to make off. Two of them escaped but the others, Nahum Ruiz and Francisco Olivero, were less lucky; the latter was mortally wounded and died shortly after; Ruiz was shot through the temple, the bullet piercing an eye, and was conveyed in a dying condition to a hospital where he lingered, surprisingly, considering his desperate condition, for two days. For some reason his other eye was removed as soon as he reached the hospital, but in spite of this, and his unconscious condition, he was closely watched by police officers in the hopes that he might speak before he died. He did not do so. His wife was with him to the end.

On the day of his death, however, as soon as the wretched man *was* dead, the Prefecture of Police, announced that at the very last, by means of a stratagem, they had got from Ruiz the information they wanted. They expected the Mexican public to believe that *in the presence of his wife*, a policeman had palmed himself off on the blinded and dying man as his brother-in-law—and in a feigned voice had asked if Ruiz had any message to leave.

"You can speak in safety," the Prefecture represented its official to have said, "no one else is here but your wife."

Ruiz, the police declared, had answered: "Tell Father Miguel Pro-Juárez, Señor Humberto his brother and Señor Luis Segura Vilchis, to hide."

Even if this childish invention had been a true story, that was all that Nahum Ruiz was ever supposed to have said.

It was ample for the purposes of Calles and the Prefecture of Police. It would serve to kill two, or more birds with one stone: it fixed the guilt of the attempt against Obregón (who was by now *determined* to get to the bottom of the affair) and would enable the Prefecture to lay hands on the priest it had been tracking down for over a year, and on two of the heads of the Leagues of Religious Defense.

It was not much to go on, but it had to do.

Father Pro, lulled by his belief that the police had half forgotten him, had moved into his father's house, 58 Calle Panuco. The Obregón affair, he believed to be occupying the police to the exclusion of smaller matters, and he continued his various activities even more coolly than before. *This*, at any rate, could not be put down to him or to his friends.

Late on the evening of November 17, three days after the attempt, Señora Montes de Oca, with whom Father Pro had lodged, was suddenly arrested and taken off to the Prefecture. Her friends, naturally extremely alarmed, tried to save her and, in the attempt the whereabouts of Father Pro and his brothers was somehow given away. Señora Montes de Oca was none the less imprisoned in the *sótanos* of the Prefecture.

Intense was the jubilation of the police: this time they held their man. Before dawn the next morning an official called Basail, and some gendarmes, approached the Pros' house with the utmost precaution, effected an entrance, and found their way to the room where Father Pro and his brother, Humberto, (and possibly Roberto as well) were asleep.

The brothers were awakened by the opening of their door; Basail and his men covered them with revolvers. "Stay where you are," Basail said.

Seeing that the Pros offered no smallest resistance, Basail bade them get up. "Come with me as you are," he said to Father Pro who was in his pajamas.

Roberto was by then, anyhow, in the room, and he as well as the other two was bidden to accompany Basail.

"I am going to confession," Humberto said to the priest.

"It is not allowed," Basail said.

"I shall hear him all the same." Father Pro led Humberto to the end of the room and gave him absolution, and then did the same for Roberto. Basail, momentarily taken aback by the priest's coolness and courage, now insisted on moving. His men were nervous; here inside a private house who knew what might not be done to them?

Nothing was done, however. "Au revoir, till heaven!"

Father Pro exclaimed as he left the house: there was a long reckoning out against him and it was unlikely that this time it would not be paid.

When they arrived at the Prefecture, Cruz who had ordered their arrest, was still asleep. While they awaited his arrival the ordinary formalities were gone through. Then a minor form of third degree was sprung upon them, and one not very likely to produce much effect, one would have thought, on desperate characters.

They were taken out to the courtyard where stood Obregón's motor-car with the broken windows. "That is what you have done!" the police exclaimed suddenly.

Humberto answered unmoved. "Well, we did not know that before!" The brothers must have stared at each other: *that* was what they were accused of! Once more martyrdom seemed to fade from Father Pro's horizon: the charge was so false that even Cruz would not be able to make it seem true.

Still, neither Cruz, nor any orders, materialized. After waiting four hours without anything happening, the accused were taken down and lodged in the cells.

The Prefecture of Police, such is the irony of things, had been built in the time of Porfirio Diaz by a friend of his, a Catholic General. Where long ago the General kept his wine in cellars, now much too damp for such a purpose, were underground cells, or *sótanos*, the very name of which is a terror to Mexicans. They are dungeons, small, dark and badly ventilated with other conditions impossible to describe in a book for civilized readers. That all those detained there do not contract the germs of typhoid, diphtheria, or worse, must be due to the strength of Mexican constitutions. Many illnesses, some of them fatal, have, however, been contracted there—chronic rheumatism being one of the least.

Besides the Pros and Luis Segura Vilchis, a harmless spectator of the bomb-throwing at Chapultepec had been arrested while—not unnaturally—running in the opposite direction to the exploding bombs. He was a young Catholic creole workman named Tirado. He contracted such terrible pneumonia in his few days imprisonment that he was unable to stand upright when led out to be shot in the patio, or Garden of Death, on to which some of the cells looked.

Apparently, in some respects, the *sótanos*—and possibly all prisons in Mexico—are run on easy-going lines. Roberto and Father Pro were eventually imprisoned together; and Humberto and—incredible as it may seem—Señora Montes de Oca who had arrived in the cells the night before.

At first, the three brothers had for a short while been in the same cell. The two younger had begun to think out what to say when confronted with judge and jury. Father Miguel stopped that at once. They would not arrange anything; he said, "Our Lord had said of such times that they should not hesitate in their answers, the Holy Ghost would guide them."

Father Pro, we are told, at once made himself loved by all; it is certain that he managed to communicate with the other prisoners; he shared his food with the warders, gave them cigarettes—"in fact, was like one of them, a companion and a friend." He actually converted one of them who consulted him as to the rights and wrongs of belonging to a secret society. After Father Pro's death he returned to the Church.

The family and friends of the Pros tried in vain to see them. The Señorita, their sister, came daily to try to do so, and to bring them food.

For three days the outside world heard nothing of the supposed "assassins." Their families had no idea what the charge against them was.

Their cells gave on to a central apartment and faced each other, so that they could communicate at least by signs. Often Father Pro said the Rosary aloud for all the Catholics; he gave them absolution from afar; they said prayers at night in common. It was singularly reminiscent of the prisons of the early Christian martyrs. On Sunday, November 22, the day was kept with hymns and "readings" ending by community singing of the March of St. Ignatius.

Every day the accused were sent for to be brow-beaten unofficially—they appeared before no regular tribunal of any kind. They were assured, however, that they would be brought to trial which they strenuously demanded—it was not to be borne that, as Catholics, they should be thought guilty, by the world, of attempted assassination. If they were tried and the case went against them they were liable, according to Mexican Law, to imprisonment for a term of from eight to twelve years for attempted murder. But the trial *could* not go against them, for there could be no adverse evidence as they were innocent.

On November 21, Cruz issued information to the Press stating that Father Pro was one of the "intellectual directors" of the plot which he alleged had been hatched by the Leagues of Defense, and that Humberto and Segura Vilchis had been in the car from which the bombs were thrown. . . . Humberto, as he could, of course, have proved, had been playing lawn-tennis at the time: Cruz asserted that all four prisoners had confessed their guilt. . . .

Article 20 of the Mexican Constitution sets forth, that at the end of forty-eight hours prisoners must make their preliminary declaration before a judge. At the end of seventy-two hours the judge will decree the liberty, or liberty under bond, or give a formal order of imprisonment for the accused. Not one of these and other constitutional provisions for the protection of accused persons was even attempted to be complied with.

On November 22, a photographer was allowed into the Prefecture to "take" the prisoners—as a warning to others, one assumes. One or two newspaper men also succeeded in interviewing them.

The interview published by the "Excelsior," on the same day, says:

"Under police guard, the priest Miguel Augustin Pro was brought in and presented to us.

" 'Are you a priest?' we asked.

" 'Yes, Señor, a Jesuit priest.'

" 'Do you wish to make any statement?'

" 'I wish to make no statement. I will only say that I am thankful for the attentions on the part of those who have arrested me. I have had absolutely nothing to do with this affair, as I am a law-abiding man. I am quite at ease in the matter, and I trust that justice will be done. I DENY definitely having taken any part in this plot.' "

It is to be noted that the word DENY appears in the paper itself in large type.

"El Universal" in its edition of the same day, stated:

"When we asked him [Father Pro] about his participation in the criminal act which had been imputed to him, he said: 'I have nothing to do with these revolutionary schemes: when justice is done me, it will be seen that I spoke the truth.' He most resolutely denied having taken any part in the attempt, and he also expressed the desire that as soon as possible he be committed so that the judge, once convinced of his innocence, might set him at liberty.

"When we asked Humberto Pro he answered: 'The account which I have given the police is accurate,' and he started to retire, but returned, and said: 'I wish to emphasize my denial of having taken any part in this affair, and all I ask is that they grant me the opportunity of proving my assertion. It is useless to go on talking about the matter. All I hope is that the fullest justice will be done.'

" 'Do you care to tell us, Señor Segura, what part you took in this attempt?' He shook his head in denial, and answered: 'I have nothing, absolutely nothing to say.'

"We tried to get Señora Montes de Oca to give us some details about her share in the affair, but she shook her head, 'I have had nothing at all to do with the matter,' she said drily.

" 'What, then, is the reason for your detention?'

" 'I don't know.'

"Tirado sees no more use in repeating his denials. The only thing that interests him is to make it clear that he had no part in the attempt, and that he was only a witness of what took place."

Meanwhile, Obregón was taking steps on his own account. There was, to his mind, something extremely equivocal in the arrest of four more than doubtful suspects of whose trial nothing further was being heard.

On that same November 22, he sent his lawyer, Arturo H. Orci, who had been in his car with him at the moment of the attempted assassination, to the police department. Señor Guerra-Leal, secretary to General Cruz, informed Señor Orci that his chief was out and could not be seen then or later.

General Obregón, said his lawyer, was anxious to know when the trial was coming on as he, personally, did not believe in the guilt of these prisoners. The secretary then handed Señor Orci a paper, the process. The lawyer read it:

"But this is not an indictment, it is simply your police report preceding the investigation."

"It is all we have," was the secretary's answer.

"And what does Cruz, the Chief of Police, think of the guilt of the prisoners?" enquired the lawyer who had been sent to get to the bottom of things.

The secretary paused. Then he said: "The brothers Pro, Miguel and Humberto, have not confessed any complicity in the crime and we have no proof against them. About the others, ask them yourself." He spoke significantly, we are told.

Señor Orci, the lawyer, then intimated that General Obregón hoped the full investigation of the matter would not be delayed. The Secretary replied that the following day the matter would be handed over to a judge.

On the next morning, at an early hour, *without so much as their having been before any examining judge and without having been allowed to see any lawyer*, or even a friend who might have conveyed their plight to the world, Father Pro and his three companions were taken into the patio, or garden, of the Prefecture, and shot.

"What was not my surprise," said Obregón's secretary that day, "when sitting in my office I was informed that the four prisoners had been executed. I spoke over the 'phone with the Chief of Police, Cruz, asking him for further details; for the reason why the investigation had not been finished, and why there had been nothing which could be called judicial action. General Cruz answered me with the explanation: 'Before your visit to the police station, and in spite of the recommendations of General Obregón, *I had a positive order to do what I did.*' "

Cruz himself had been amazed at receiving from Calles on the evening previous the order for the slaughter. Cruz had suggested that possibly legal proceedings should precede the execution—how was he to give a semblance of legality to the execution in the center of Mexico City of four *untried* prisoners?

"I do not want formalities, what I want is the fact," was the only answer Calles vouchsafed, and on the strength of that answer Father Pro and his brother and companions were murdered.

It was generally believed in Mexico that, as the facts indicated, Calles had other reasons besides his anti-religious monomania for this outrage on humanity and the Constitution of his country. He would be able, he believed, to *stun* public opinion, (and incidentally Obregón's opinion) into the belief—or at any rate into acceptance of the fact—of the prisoners' guilt; that the would-be assassins had paid, not the legal penalty of 8-12 years imprisonment for their crime, but the death penalty improvised by himself, *must* show them to be guilty—so he appears to have reasoned. That he could, at the same time, make away with men, and especially a priest, whom his agents had for long marked down, was a stroke of good fortune.

Basail, with the strange mingling of something like humanity which the agents of the Mexican tyrants at times displayed, remarked to Señora Montes de Oca, on the evening of the day of the execution, "If the poor Father [Pro] is dead, it is because of the League". [of religious defense].

Señora Montes de Oca in whose house, it was asserted, bombs, arms and "many documents" (in reality a post card of Father Pro's, and a letter of the A. C. J. M. of Tacubaya about the boycott) had been found, was never even formally examined; she remained in prison for some time and was then exiled to the United States.

Public opinion, even there, was somewhat stirred. Mr. Carleton Beals, usually sympathetic with the Mexican Government, wrote in the American "New Republic" of December 21, 1927, as follows:

> "Every constitutional and humanitarian guarantee was violated in the case of the four civilians, members of the Catholic League of Religious Defense, one of them a priest, who were alleged to have hurled the dynamite bomb at Alvaro Obregón's auto in Chapultepec Park and to have engaged in shipping ammunition in egg cases (heavy eggs!) to the 'Hail, Christ the King' rebels in the states of Michoacan and Jalisco. . . . Universal doubt has been cast on their guilt, and a hundred rumors set afloat that the Government hastened to assassinate them in order to conceal the real culprits. . . . But all criticism has been stifled by the iron-clad censorship maintained by the Government over all newspapers and cable service, and the fear engendered by the recent arbitrary deportation of prominent Mexican editorial writers. This flashlight violence—comparable, in my mind, to the Matteotti murder—must be stigmatized as a tactical stupidity and a moral blot on an administra-

tion which has, on the whole, been energetic, far-sighted, and constructive. Unfortunately, this deplorable incident is not an isolated one. It is the culmination of a long train of official acts, resulting from the conflict with the Church. . . ." *

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* Reprinted by permission of the "New Republic" and Mr. Beals.

CHAPTER XV

THE Prefecture of Police, the sumptuous home built for his family by the old Catholic General, was close to the bustling Plaza de la Reforma in the very heart of the capital. But the Avenida in which it actually stood was a street in which, as it left the Plaza, all life seemed to die.

The Prefecture rose in gloom and majesty from an empty, gloomy street as if its iron gates, its procession of prison-vans and mortuary cars, had frightened from its immediate neighborhood all those not forced to go in and out in that year 1927.

Beyond the iron gates was an interior patio—the Garden of Death—where long ago the General had planted oleanders and roses, mimosas and lilies of the Madonna, all the bright, graceful, flowering things young girls might like to tend.

Close by was the American Consulate General; on the corner was the National Lottery building; in the Plaza all the life and stir whose echoes fell dead as they reached the Avenida of the *sótanos* and the torture chambers.

On the morning of November 23, 1927, the Mexican newspapers in the Plaza, and the city generally, had contained the information, sent to them the previous day by the Chief of Police, Roberto Cruz, that the trial of the prisoners would take place that day.

But at about eight o'clock an activity disproportionate to this announcement was noticed in the precincts of the Prefecture: *troops* were seen to arrive; then the Press and photographers with cameras. Generals in shining uniforms in splendid cars kept dashing up; words of command inside the patio were shouted.

A crowd began to collect. Someone started a rumor:—they are going to *shoot* the Obregón prisoners! Soon the Plaza de la Reforma was dark with people; the Avenida was impassable; traffic round about was stopped—there were far too many people, the authorities thought, and many of these people had an ugly look. . . .

But there were the troops. And the mass knew better than to agitate about a rumour, and at the very gates of the dread Headquarters. . . . The mounted gendarmes, too, knew better than not to fire on their fellow-citizens if ordered to do so, and such orders had been far from infrequent since the religious troubles. Besides, machine-guns were being mounted on the roof. Fresh reinforcements of police kept arriving.

An anxious people waited. Men died daily inside those iron gates, but quietly, without ostentation: this affair was on a bigger scale.

Shortly after ten o'clock General Gomez Velasco, Chief of the Traffic Department, and Colonel Cornejo, arrived, the latter was the official witness of executions. These two, with General Cruz, who had by now arrived; General Lopez known (for his incredible brutalities) as Lopez the Killer; José Mazcórro, the unspeakable head of the Secret Police; Guerra-Leal, Cruz's Secretary, and many newspaper correspondents whose presence Calles had had the effrontery to allow at the execution, all lined up at one end of the garden.

The once beautiful patio of the Catholic General is a large oblong, still shaded on both sides by fine leafy trees. At the far end, however, along the whole wall is a rough firing-stand, a stockade of logs filled with earth and supported by four decapitated trunks of elm trees. The ground rises slightly to meet the transversal logs, and it is at the base of this rise that the prisoner stands to face the firing squad. Against this erection are three monstrous wooden figures not unlike Aztec idols: "they are used," said "El Universal," in its account of the executions, "as targets for those making their first essays at this pastime" [shooting]. In the garden were the camera men who had been allowed there, it was said, in order to terrify Catholics with photographs of the event. There were, besides, the four firing squads and other soldiers and police.

As soon as all the brightly-uniformed generals and officers were in their places in a long line facing the stockade, General Cruz signed to Mazcórro who with two gendarmes disappeared into the Prefecture.

Father Pro and his brothers had slept well. This day, they really believed, they would at last appear before some competent authority, prove their innocence and be released. Father Pro must have been chafing at the waste of precious time.

He was, therefore, not in the least surprised when a gendarme appeared in his cell and summoned him and his brother Humberto to follow him. Father Pro immediately left his cell. He was wearing a dark lounge suit and no waistcoat.

Mazcórro, described as a slouching, bloated, ungainly figure, had not entered the cell but waited outside. "You had better put on a waistcoat," he said.

Father Pro went back and fetched a woollen cardigan, "brown with wavy stripes." No word was said to him then or later to tell him he was to die; still less was there the comedy of any legal formality.

But he seems to have guessed. Most probably from the gendarme's face. For Roberto, who helped his brother with the cardigan, felt his hand pressed with particular insistence and himself then knew the worst.

Father Pro turned to the other cells: "*Adios, hijos míos! Adios, hermanos míos!*" ("Good-bye, my sons, my brothers") and prepared to follow the gendarme. The latter haltingly asked the priest's pardon.

"Not only do I pardon you, but I thank you!" Father Pro said. He added, "I will pray for you," and put his arms around the man's shoulders.

Then the priest, unbound, accompanied Mazcórro up the dark narrow stone steps of the *sótanos* to the light of the patio.

There, there could be no more doubt that the hour he had hoped for had come.*

The garden was lined with soldiers. On a low raised dais were the Generals, smoking and chatting, officers of subordinate rank, newspaper men, detectives. The Generals stopped chatting as Father Pro emerged into the sunlight of the bright, high-skied morning.

He was perfectly calm, but pale. On one side of him "shuffled," says Captain McCullagh, Mazcórro in a slouch hat well pulled down, and a voluminous coat with the collar well up. On the other side was a man in a Burberry, but neither Father Pro nor his companions were handcuffed, nor were these two men at all close to him, they just advanced together to the spot which Mazcórro had indicated by a gesture.

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* For the full and very detailed account by an eye-witness of the whole scene, see Captain Francis McCullagh's book, "Red Mexico." Captain McCullagh has in "Red Mexico," "The Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity," and "A Prisoner of the Reds" enough to stir the coldest heart. "Red Mexico," indeed, is written in such a white heat of generous indignation as to have produced in some people the reaction already mentioned—"It *must* be exaggerated."

On the way they were stopped so that the photograph of Father Pro might be taken.

I think that this photographing of condemned men brings home to us, as much as any other detail, the cruelty of Calles.

In the garden, on that sunlit morning, the man who was walking up it to his death was stopped and the cameras of half a dozen camera men were turned on him. He just stood there quietly looking at them.

Then an officer took him in charge. "Miguel Augustin Pro," he read rather mumblingly from a paper, and with his bare sword he indicated a spot against the logs and the huge wooden figures where Father Pro was to stand.

The long row of generals strained forward: the young man who looked more like a student than the famous Jesuit they had been after for so long was talking to the Major at the *paredón* or firing-place.

The Major had asked the usual question—any last request? Father Pro had answered, "*Que me permitan rezar*"—"That I may be allowed to pray."

Then "the young priest," says Captain McCullagh who was watching in shrinking horror, "knelt bolt upright, his eyes closed, his arms folded on his breast: even in that place of squalor and death, he was a picture of saintly dignity and recollection." Thus the photographs of the camera men again show him; superb dignity and meekness combine in his profile, clear-cut against the wood of one of the "Aztec idols," and in his downcast eyes.

He remained two minutes on his knees and then rose up and turned to face the massed uniforms under the trees by the house, and the firing squad. His face was alight, they say, "aglow as from some mighty inspiration"; he raised his arm with a wide gesture, in the dignity and solemnity of the priesthood given him in the quiet little Belgian town three years before.

"Dios tenga compasion de vosotros!" ("May God have mercy on you!") *"Que Dios los bendiga!"* ("May God bless you!") *"Señor, Tu sabes que soy inocente!"* ("Lord, Thou knowest that I am innocent!") *"Perdono de todo corazon a mis enemigos!"* ("With all my heart I forgive my enemies!").

When he had finished speaking, the Major, with the drawn sword, moved some half-dozen yards away to be out of the range of fire, and Miguel Pro was left standing alone, unbound and unblinded, against the stockade.

"But," says Captain McCullagh, "there was no sense of loneliness and abandonment in the last look he gave at the world: on the contrary a strange exultation shone in his face as if he already felt himself shaded by the mighty wings of his patron, San Miguel, the Archangel of Death, as if he saw in the sky towards which his eyes were raised, the figure of Christ the King, crowned, throned . . . triumphant."

"Prepare!" It was the word of command. The gendarmes took aim. Miguel Pro had taken from his breast-pocket the plain brass crucifix that Jesuits are given on the morning they take their religious vows; he held it in his right hand, in the other the rosary with which he had prayed at Lourdes. As the five rifles were levelled at him, he opened his arms in the form of a cross. Very distinctly, but as I have been told, in a voice no louder than that he used at Mass at the consecration of the Host, he said, "Hail, Christ the King!" *"Viva Cristo Rey,"* the battle-cry of the persecuted.

"Fire!" There was the loud report of the rifles, five bullets pierced his breast; "there was a look of agony on the face," but his arms were still extended in the form of a cross and, before he fell, "the official photographer, had 'snapped' the dead body while it was still upright."

It fell crumpled at the foot of the stockade; the sergeant in charge of the firing party advanced and placing his muzzle close to the right temple gave the *tiro de gracia,* spattering the right side of the martyr's face with blood and gunpowder.

The body was left lying there in all the disarray of death by violence; in his extended right hand Father Pro still grasped his little crucifix.

After him, were led out to be shot three of his companions.

First came Luis Segura Vilchis, a splendidly handsome young man—he was twenty-three—who went to the shambles "unfalteringly, more like a young athlete who goes to receive his prize or a young king who goes to mount his throne than a condemned man who goes to his death. . . . Addressing the firing party he said in a quiet conversational tone: 'I am ready, gentlemen'."

Then it was Humberto's turn to die; "superbly cool and self-possessed," he took out a medal and in looking at it, as he passed his brother's body stumbled against it—"he did not even change color."

"Where shall I stand?" he asked the Major and was shown a spot soaked in blood beside the two dead bodies. On his face as on that of Father Pro and Segura Vilchis was a look of terrible agony when the bullets pierced his breast, and then he, too, had joined the great company of martyrs.

The fourth and last victim was the poor boy Tirado against whom there was no sort of evidence, not even the perjured report of the police. He was simply shot down, as a Catholic, with the others. . . . He was so ill with pneumonia as to be unable to stand upright and was shot huddled and trembling with fever. To the usual question "Any last request?" he had said he would like to see his mother. No one paid any attention and the firing order was given.

There was a fifth prisoner, Roberto Pro; from the high window of his cell he witnessed the butchery. He had made his Act of Contrition and was waiting to die when the Argentinian Minister succeeded in getting any further execution stopped. The minister had known of the executions too late to be able to try to save the others.

While all this had been going on, at the gate leading from the garden into the street, a voice had been heard begging for admittance. It was that of the Señorita Ana-Maria Pro who had called daily to try and see her brothers. She was removed by force from the gate.

One of the big police ambulances was in waiting at this gate and now drew forward. The four bodies were carried down the garden and thrown into the van which then tried to start.

But the crowd had by this time grown to enormous proportions; though kept as far as possible from the Prefecture, it had heard the firing, caught glimpses of the troops, possibly of the victims; it was pressing ominously forward.

Cruz was alarmed; a strong force of gendarmes was ordered forward and surrounded the ambulance which drew out with difficulty into the street. The crowd pressed round, the word Martyr was heard on all sides, hats were removed and the crowd knelt down in the open streets upon the passage of the van.

Calles had done his worst; his was the victory.

But Father Pro, and his brother and disciple, Captain McCullagh tells us, when facing the firing-squad had all three looked with gentleness, with compassion, on Cruz and his associates. In the light of that pitying look, the Christian spectator suddenly felt, he says—and I think this is almost a greater tribute to the marytrs than their death itself—that Calles and all persecutors were to be pitied, and prayed for, *not* hated.

If the martyrs could so truly forgive their enemies, show such compassion for their murderers as to change the burning hatred of spectators into a like pity, it seems almost their supreme achievement.

* * *

The four bodies were driven from the Prefecture to the amphitheater of a hospital. News of their death had flown from mouth to mouth and before long Señor Pro, an old man of seventy-five years, arrived at the hospital to claim the bodies of his sons.

As soon as he was admitted he went to the slabs upon which lay the bodies and lifted the cover from off that of his eldest son and very reverently pressed his lips to the cold forehead, wiping off, as a relic, a drop of blood which still hung on the gaping wound made by the *tiro de gracia.*

The face had lost its look of agony and was serene, with eyes not absolutely closed, the mouth still slightly open as if breathing. The poor civilian tie was rumpled and disarranged, the dark hair pushed right off the forehead that was still, with the right cheek, bespattered blackly with powder. Otherwise Miguel Pro lay in all the usual majesty of death.

Señorita Ana Pro who had made her way home from the Prefecture, arrived with other ladies—she threw herself weeping into her father's arms.

"My daughter," he said gently, "there is nothing here for which to weep."

The bodies of the two brothers were then taken to their father's house and lay in state.

To weeping, or outraged, spectators of Señor Pro's long vigil by the coffins of his two eldest sons, the old man turned once and said quietly: "The priest was an apostle, my Humberto lived like an angel. They died for God and are already happy in heaven."

Roberto had been promised by his jailers that he should be allowed to visit the bodies at dead of night. The Blessed Sacrament was brought to the house so that he might be given Holy Communion. In the end he was unable to leave prison, and the Blessed Sacrament remained all night upon the coffins. . . .

And now began the triumph of the martyrs.

"On November 23, from five to eleven o'clock at night, at which hour the doors of the house were closed, and from six the next morning to half-past three in the afternoon, the hour of the funeral, many thousands passed through the room where the bodies rested, anxious to venerate the remains of the martyrs, to kiss the caskets, and to touch them with pieces of linen, rosaries, medals, and other pious objects.

"In all those who came there was to be seen intense grief joined with a profound respect and deep devotion.

"Many were the moving scenes that were enacted during these hours. I must content myself with mentioning the following. A lady of high social standing drew her little son of ten years by the hand, and with all the fervor of her Christian heart, said to him: 'My son, look at these martyrs; I have brought you for that; engrave deeply on your memory what you see, so that when you grow up you will know how to give your life for the defense of the Faith of Christ, and to die as these men have died, blamelessly and bravely.'

"Without the least fear of the Government officials, one of the Jesuit fathers, a brother in religion of the martyrs, clad in cassock and surplice, remained at the house, and in the presence of all recited the usual prayers of the Church. Various other priests recited the Office of the Dead, and celebrated Holy Mass.

"Throughout the night of the 23rd-24th, the Blessed Sacrament reposed upon the coffins alternately, a scene which brought back to memory the age-old traditions of the catacombs.

"The father of the martyrs gave sublime proof of Christian fortitude, passing long hours on his knees before the bodies of his sons, resting his hands upon the coffin and buried in profound meditation. He evinced a noble pride in his sons, without any sign of hostility towards the murderers, or speaking ill of them.

"On November 24, at half-past three in the afternoon, the hour for the burial, the clergy disputed with one another the honor of bearing the remains upon their shoulders as far as the hearses, which were the finest in the city. The hearse which was to bear the remains of the priest was entirely white.

"In these moments grief was turned into joy, the funeral cortège into a triumphal march, a real Catholic outburst, such, perhaps, as has not been seen in the history of the nation. More than twenty thousand, defying the anger of the persecutors, and opening for themselves a way between bayonets, rushed out to acclaim Christ the King and the new martyrs.

"The Catholics of the capital re-enacted one of those processions of the Eternal City, the people filled with enthusiasm bearing in triumph the remains of their martyrs.

"When the crowd caught sight of the remains of the martyrs, it felt itself swept by a great wave of enthusiasm and onrush of faith. The Spirit of God had taken possession of the multitude, filling it with fortitude. From the time the remains left the house until the crowd returned from the cemetery of Dolores led by Señor Pro, it never ceased from its prayers, hymns, and enthusiastic cries of *Viva Cristo Rey!* They cried, 'Long live the martyrs! Long live the Pope! Long live our Bishops! Long live our priests! Long live religion! Lord, if You wish martyrs, here is our blood, here are our lives.'

"Traffic was interrupted at different points during the passage of the funeral, and the street cars were emptied as the passengers got out to swell the ranks of the marchers.

"Along the line of march a perfect wall was formed of those who came out to assist at the interment, and the streets and avenues were carpeted with flowers.

"As soon as they left the central part of the city, men took the bodies from the hearses and carried them upon their shoulders to the grave. On seeing this, all those who were riding in automobiles, got out of their cars to traverse the rest of the way on foot.

"Owing to the immense crowd that took part in the manifestation, the funeral was some three hours in reaching the cemetery. On its arrival at the hill of Dolores, the vast crowd that could be seen scattered over the level ground was probably greater even than the crowd that was ascending the hill.

"When the two sections joined in the broad way the enthusiasm became indescribable; enthusiasm and fervor, a strange mingling of triumph and of mourning which characterized the afternoon. Hymns and canticles to Christ the King were taken up again with the effect that a cataract of voice seemed to be hurling itself down from the summit of the height of Dolores, flowing throughout the valley, engulfing in its passage the neighboring Alcazar of Chapultepec, and throwing into consternation, without doubt, its Olympian master, whose secret hatred in spite of himself had caused that public manifestation. . . .

"While the body of the priest was being placed in the vault of the Society of Jesus, a profound silence fell upon the enthusiastic multitude, but as soon as the body was deposited, the enthusiasm was renewed and burst all bounds at a sudden shout of 'Long live the first Jesuit martyr of Christ the King!'

"At the graveside of Humberto, his father, with hands that trembled for all his courage, threw the first handful of earth upon the coffin; he then stood back and said in a loud, firm voice: 'Te Deum laudamus. . . .'

"The graves were transformed into veritable mountains of flowers. The faithful remained close by singing and praying until nightfall when the gates of the cemetery had to be closed."

Such was the funeral of the "little novice" of El Llano, of the Jester and Good Comrade of the Jesuit Residences.

In his wildest jestings, God's jester can never have outlined for himself a funeral such as this; nor, in his dreams of martyrdom, an earthly triumph like that of the Valley of Dolores.

There are many accounts of it extant; I think the one quoted (from "An Outlaw of Christ," translated from the Spanish) is as comprehensive as any. It omits one detail: the crowds of *working* men and women who at dawn (six o'clock of a November morning) filed past the body of their friend and protector, he who had, humanly speaking, on the day previous needed a protector and found none. Nor does it mention the five hundred motor-cars which formed a double rampart for the procession walking between them in the crowded Paseo de la Reforma and other principal streets of the city.

The triumphant funeral march had something of the miraculous about it. It would have been a marvelous demonstration at any time—there was the utmost difficulty first in reaching the hearses with the coffins, then in getting the procession under way, so vast was the concourse, so frenzied were the people to touch, to be near the white coffin of Father Pro and that of Humberto.

Every balcony, in that land of balconies, was filled and every window on the route, and from hundreds of windows flowers were showered—all this in the city of Calles, at the height of a terrible and bloody persecution when every participant in the funeral laid him- or herself open to arrest; when at any moment troops might have been brought up to fire upon the crowds. But Calles, rage as he might, was for once afraid; he had to remain at Chapultepec from where, as the quoted account suggests, he could hear the hymns of the Catholics winging through the valley.

The funeral of Luis Segura Vilchis, the boy who had been arrested while working quietly at his office—

a local light and power company—was at Tepeyac close to the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It likewise was a triumph, the magnificent coffin being borne on the shoulders of six of his personal friends amid wonderful homage to the "engineer-martyr."

The burial of Tirado next day was likewise both touching and wonderful. He had been a working boy of nineteen living with his parents in the extremest poverty; his old father was totally blind. Neither father nor mother had any idea that the boy had been shot till some compassionate ladies of the city set out to inform them that their son's body was lying unclaimed at the hospital.

The parents were so poor as to be unable to pay for any form of burial; a well-known firm of undertakers, therefore, "sent one of their most sumptuous hearses to this miserable cottage, with abundant carriages." His fellow-workmen, however, insisted on carrying the coffin on their shoulders the entire way; the funeral took over two hours, being another demonstration of the courage and faith of the people.

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE day following the executions a group of Mexican lawyers presented to Mr. Morrow, the United States Ambassador to Mexico, a document entitled "Brief Considerations Concerning the Execution by the Police of Four Prisoners." It was hoped that the United States might use its powerful influence with Calles. The document ran as follows:—

"The death of the following gentlemen: Augustin Pro-Juárez, priest; Humbert, his brother; Luis Segura and J. Tirado, is, legally, murder, both because of the deed itself and because of the following circumstances that contributed to it:

"1. This sentence was decreed and carried out by the head of the executive power and his subordinates, who, according to the law and legal procedure of Mexico, are absolutely unqualified to decree it.

"2. The accused were not given any real trial, since they were not brought before any penal tribunal, as is contemplated when dealing with crimes committed by civilians.

"3. They were not given a counsel for their defense, nor any opportunity of nominating one, as the order for execution was communicated to them only a few minutes before it was carried out, thereby making impossible any appeal which could save them from death.

"4. The necessary formalities of legal procedure were not observed.

"5. The accused were regarded as convicted and confessed criminals, solely on the alleged declaration of a dying man, extracted by deceit, and one that could not be contradicted, as the man was dead. In connection with this it is to be noted that this declaration was published after the death of the supposed accuser, and, secondly, that the doctors who attended him, and the police authorities themselves, declared that this man was in a state of complete unconsciousness.

"6. The ground for regarding the accused as confessed criminals is certainly false in so far as it concerns Father Pro, who, according to the note prepared for the press by the police bureau, protested his innocence and declared his desire to be brought before the court to prove it. As for the declarations attributed to the engineer, Segura, they have all the appearance of being false, because, in the history of crime there is not to be found any instance so absurd as that of a guilty man, who not only confesses openly and entirely his crime, but boasts of it and supplies to his accusers more data than he is asked to give, and takes on himself the responsibility for acts that are not imputed to him; and all that, it should be noted, is said to have been done, with such a display of coolness and cynicism, by one who had not in the past been addicted to evil-doing, but was an honorable and peace-loving professional man.

"7. It is equally incredible that the supposed assailants of General Obregón should have calmly returned home after the attack and there awaited the result. This is simply an absurdity, which weighs still more in favor of the accused, for it is well known that all criminals, through an instinct of self-preservation, withdraw from the scene of the crime and from all places in which it is likely that the law would reach to take them.

"8. Lastly, even supposing the President of the Republic and his subordinates, the police authorities, had been competent to try the accused men, that these men had been tried, that in the procedure all the formalities prescribed by law had been complied with, that all the protection and help ordinarily granted to every accused person had been granted to those who were charged with the crime—not even then could the penalty inflicted be justified, because, in accordance with the Penal Code now in force, anyone who is found guilty of attempted murder, which is not effectual, may not be condemned to death, but only to imprisonment for a term of eight to twelve years. (Article 195.)"

It has been further pointed out by legal authorities that seven articles of the Mexican Constitution, relating to the arrest, imprisonment and trial of prisoners, were violated by the authorities in their treatment of Father Pro and his companions.

Father Pro's own Superior who was in close contact with him during the last months of his life wrote with equal assurance November 27, 1927, four days after the execution, "I can testify and I do so on oath that it is absolutely false that Father Pro attended any meeting in which the attack was planned, or had any part in it, or that he was the author of the plot."

* * *

"If I am caught . . . be ready with your petitions for when I am in Heaven . . ." God's Jester had said.

Already, from Mexico and elsewhere, there are accounts of startling favors received through the intercession of Miguel Augustin Pro—miracles one would call them, but that to use the word might be to forestall the judgment of the Church.

Almost the first "favor" was granted while the bodies of the martyrs were still in the house of Señor Pro.

An old, poor woman who had been blind for six years was unable to leave a little town close to Mexico City to join the crowd passing before the coffins. A Señor Valladares, living in the same house as the blind woman, suggested to her to invoke the help of Father Pro for the recovery of her sight. Scarcely had she finished praying when she rose in the utmost joy and seized her friend by the hand, thanking him radiantly for his advice. Unable to hope for such a speedy response from the martyr of a few hours earlier, he asked her if it were possible she could see.

"Yes," she said.

Señor Valladares wanted proof. He tried her in various ways. "Can you read?" he then asked.

"I used to be able to." She took the newspaper he held out to her and read from it aloud without the smallest difficulty.

Immediately the happening was made known to a priest who started on the spot for Mexico City and in presence, says Father Dragon in his account of the cures attributed to the intercession of Father Pro, "of the glorious coffins of the martyrs" informed the family of the wonder already obtained.

Even before that, however, a penitent of the priest-martyr had received an extraordinary favor. In the month of November she had been in great financial difficulties and had taken a whole sheaf of documents to Father Pro who had promised to help her with advice. The first notice the poor woman had of his death was from the newspapers on the day of his execution. In great agony of mind she rushed off to a lawyer explaining her circumstances and that Father Pro, her adviser, had been shot.

"Oh, that is quite impossible," said the lawyer, "not ten minutes ago he came himself and brought me your papers." . . .

This fact, Father Dragon comments, is naturally more difficult to establish than that of bodily cures duly attested. But it seems, he adds, as if Father Pro's plan was to imitate St. Theresa of Lisieux—and other saints—and not to rest content with raining favors from heaven but to bring them himself to earth.

The above episode was soon known all over Mexico.

Two years previous to his martyrdom, a young Poor Clare had fallen downstairs and sustained severe internal injuries and, though she recovered, it was to endure continuous and dreadful pain. On January 25, 1928, ten months after his death, someone took to the Convent a relic of Father Pro. On making use of this relic the little Sister felt her pain diminish; by the next day it had gone. . . . She was able shortly after to leave her bed, to dress herself without aid or any pain, to walk and to go up and down stairs and to take her place once more in the community in perfect health.

The following are extracts from the memorandum, signed by a medical man, of a case, the account of which has been given very general publicity.

"On July 17, last [1927], Señorita Joaquina Delgado y Riestra consulted me, asking me to examine a breast in which she believed there was a tumor. I discovered in effect, hard and painful ganglions in the left breast. I informed the patient that these tumors were dangerous, and advised amputation. She, however, refused to be operated upon.

"As she insisted on my suggesting some other course, I recommended her to Dr. Peter for X-ray treatment. Two months later she returned to me. To my horror I found the ganglions very greatly developed and the patient complaining of pain in the left lung. It was no longer a case of wasting time . . . but of operating.

"I gave her a card for Dr. Rafael Raygadas Vértiz. . . . She did not go there but to the Doctors Gutiérrez and Eguílez. One of them said to her after an examination: 'There is no other course open but that of operating. No one expects miracles and, any way, not their occurrence in the twentieth century.' " Possibly the terrified girl may have spoken of her hope of such a miracle.

"In the beginning of December the Superior of the Theresian Convent of Mixcoac informed me that the patient had decided to undergo the operation. I begged the nun to be so good as to tell her not to return to me. I did not then wish to operate myself, as I did not care to expose myself to certain failure.

"Three days later Señorita Delgado came and begged me to examine her. I was amazed at her appearance of health; the enormous ganglions that I had noted had practically disappeared.

"I examined the patient for the last time on December 26, [1927], and gave her the medical certificates required in the circumstances. I declared in them that 'Señorita Delgado y Riestra is in perfect health and there are not even any traces of lesion.'

"I have forgotten to say that when the patient witnessed my astonishment at finding her recovered, she affirmed that she had recommended herself to Father Pro and that it was to that fact and that alone she owed the state of health in which I saw her.

"I am prepared to affirm before ecclesiastical authority and on oath what I have just written.

"(Dr.) L. G. Vasques,
"Mexico D. F., January 4th, 1928."

Favors obtained through Father Pro's intercession are not confined to Mexico. A cure, duly attested by a medical man, Dr. Juan Sola Surís, took place at Barcelona a year after Father Pro's death. The patient was a poor and elderly servant (precisely of the class he would had loved, on earth, to help), Concepción Vague, who was obliged, being unable otherwise to continue to earn her living, to consent to have her middle finger and a portion of her hand amputated.

On the actual day before the operation a nun-visitor suggested to the poor woman, who greatly dreaded the operation, to recommend herself to Father Pro, explaining that he had been martyred just a year previous.

"Have courage and confidence and I can assure you that to-morrow there will be no operation, for he will cure you."

As she spoke she put a small picture of the martyr on the affected part and replaced the bandage over it.

"Some minutes later," says Concepción in her own signed account, "I felt as if fire were burning my hand, so much so that I could scarcely bear the pain. Then it seemed to me as if my finger, bent from the disease, was straightening itself out to its normal position. I can further certify that during that night I had no pain" (the antecedent pain of the left hand had been intense). "The doctor on seeing me was thunderstruck. He said to those with him: 'I think the amputation is no longer necessary. . . . It is needless to operate.' Since that day," she joyfully adds, "I can work, my hand can bear heavy weights. In a word I am perfectly cured." And she rather touchingly adds, "Thanks to the Martyr I can gain my bread with my work and the sweat of my brow"—only her phrasing is a little more primitive.

By every post, accounts of favors and graces from all over the world, are received by those seeking to advance the Cause of Beatification. The poor of Mexico send continually the simplest recitals with just their "Thanks to Father Pro," as in his lifetime.

In his own country devotion to his memory seemed not so much to spread as to be born and to blossom in a night, in a wonderful recognition and gratitude for all he had done and suffered for Mexico. His temporary resting-place in the cemetery on the hill of Dolores was from the very first a place to which, daily, some at least of the inhabitants of Mexico City found their way. On feast days it has all the air of a real place of pilgrimage, not least, one is glad to think, for the poor, the workers and the dispossessed whom he served.

AFTERWORD

This book is not in the fullest sense a Life of Father Miguel Pro-Juárez and, even so, is indebted for much of its material to Father Dragon, S.J.'s book "Le Père Pro."

To others who have helped, I am also sincerely grateful and it is by their wish that I do not mention them here.

In the use of the words Saint or Martyr in the text, there is, of course, no intention of forestalling any decision of the Church.

APPENDIX

DES ÂMES

A la veille de ma troisième opération, avant d'apprendre la mort de ma mère.

Seigneur, ôtez-moi tout, mais donnez-moi des âmes;
Otez-moi la santé, la fortune, l'honneur,
Mais donnez un essor aux dévorantes flammes
Que le zèle et l'amour allument dans mon cœur.

Envoyez-moi l'exil, l'abandon, la misère,
Que la main d'un ami ne sèche pas mes pleurs,
Privez-moi même encore des baisers de ma mère . . .
Mais donnez-moi, mon Dieu, les âmes des pécheurs!

Qu'en proie à la douleur, l'amitié m'abandonne,
Que jamais une voix ne reponde à ma voix;
Qu'en mon triste chemin, je ne trouve personne
Qui partage un instant le fardeau de ma croix;

Je ne me plaindrai pas si votre main de père
Par des maux plus cruels veut encore m'éprouver;
Je consens à n'avoir nul bonheur sur la terre . . .
Mais donnez-moi, mon Dieu, des âmes à sauver.

C'est la seule faveur qu'ici-bas je réclame,
Fallut-il de l'exil prolonger la rigueur;
Si je puis à ce prix sauver une seule âme,
Différez, j'y consens, mon éternel bonheur.

Oui . . . je voudrais sauver ces âmes que le monde
Dans le sentier du mal entraine chaque jour;

Je voudrais que ma voix, par la grâce féconde,
Pût gagner l'univers à votre saint amour.

Votre amour . . . mais c'est tout! il tient lieu de richesses,
De gloire, de plaisirs, de patrie et d'honneur;
Ah! lorsqu'on a goûté ses divines tendresses
Comment ne pas vouloir en embraser les cœurs?

Jésus, donnez-moi part à cette soif ardente
Qui vous fit sur la croix appeler les pécheurs;
Donnez-moi de vos saints la parole brûlante
Et le zèle puissant et les tendres ardeurs.

Le zèle, c'est le feu que votre amour nous donne,
C'est le rayon divin qui part de votre Cœur,
C'est de ce Cœur blessé l'épineuse couronne
Qui montre qu'on l'achète au prix de la douleur.

Mais ma douleur à moi . . . qu'est-elle auprès d'une âme,
D'une âme qui coûta votre sang rédempteur?
Que du moins votre amour et son ardente flamme
A mon offrande ici donnent quelque valeur.

Puisse mon faible cœur s'appuyant sur le vôtre,
Y brûler de ce feu qui ne s'éteint jamais,
Et sur ce Cœur sacré, devenant votre apôtre
De l'amour qui s'immole apprendre les secrets.

Charité de mon Dieu, dans ton sein je m'abîme,
Toi seule me suffis, Ô Source de tout bien . . .
Et maintenant, Seigneur, frappez votre victime
Je vous ai tout donné, je ne réserve rien . . .

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